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THE  
HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE;  
OR,  
THE ELIXIR OF GOLD.

A Romance,

BY A SOUTHERN LADY.

[Warfield Catherine Annis Ware]

"For over all there hung a cloud of fear;  
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,  
And said as plain as whisper in the ear,  
The place is haunted."

THOMAS HOOD (*The Haunted House*)

"Dark lowers our fate,  
And terrible the storm that gathers o'er us,  
But nothing, till that latest agony  
That severs thee from nature shall unloose  
This fixed and sacred hold, in thy dark prison house,  
In the terrific face of armed law,  
Yea, on the scaffold, if it needs must be,  
I never will forsake thee."

JOANNA BAILLIE (*De Monfort—A Tragedy*).

IN TWO VOLUMES.

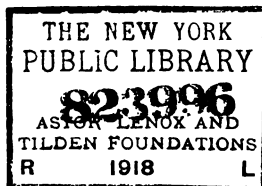
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TO

**MRS. SARAH DORSEY.**

OF ASHWOOD, LOUISIANA,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED, NOT MORE FROM REGARD TO THE LIVING THAN IN MEMORY  
OF THE DEAD,

BY HER FRIEND AND KINSWOMAN,

**THE AUTHOR.**

1000

1000



## TO THE PUBLIC.

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“FOR us, and for our tragedie,  
Here stooping to your clemencie,  
We beg your hearing patiently.”

HAMLET, *Prologue.*



## BOOK FIRST.

"The fountains of my heart dried up within me,  
With none to love me and with none to love,  
I stood upon the desert earth, alone."

MATURIN.

"I should sin  
To think but nobly of my grandmother."

TEMPEST.

"And soon within her hospitable hall,  
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light  
Of the woodfire, and round his shoulders fall,  
And his wan visage and his withered men,  
Yet calm and gentle and majestic,  
Such was Zonora."

SHELLEY (*Prince Athanase*).



# THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE.



## B O O K I.

### CHAPTER I.

It was evening when we reached the goal of a long journey by sea and land,—and saw, brought out into picturesque relief by the red-setting sun and the dun clouds around it, the broad and singular mansion that was thenceforth to be my home. As we paused for a moment at the gate, difficult to move from long disuse, and swinging slowly back on its obelisks of stone, I clung with a feeling of vague terror to my companion's arm, and my eyes dwelt anxiously on his features, as if in their impassible calm I could read my future.

This stranger—for I had never seen his face nor heard his name, until, armed with some authority none dared or cared to dispute, he stood in Taunton Tower, and claimed the right to convey me to a new home in a foreign land, and to relatives I had never known—now seemed my nearest friend. Insensibly during our long journey, his quiet voice and manner had stolen through the crust of my reserve, and won my entire confidence—a confidence never partially accorded.



His gaze, his smile, his tones, his very gestures, were instinct with a latent melancholy power—potent with a nature like my own, quick to impetuosity ; yet, now he did not notice me, intent as he had heretofore been on my slightest requisitions ; but, gazing forward with a strange eagerness I had not marked in him previously, he murmured between his set teeth :

“God grant us good tidings ; what may *not* have happened during this long and cruel absence ?”

The carriage, which had brought us from the nearest town, now wound through the shadowed gravel road that led to the mansion’s front—a road evidently little used for such a purpose, for the dark, unpruned branches above us swept constantly across its roof and windows with a harsh, grating sound that made my blood curdle.

“They seem to be trying to drive us back,” I said at last.

“‘They ?’ To whom do you refer, Lilian ?” asked Dr. Quintil, starting as if from reverie. “Have you seen any one ?”

“Only the branches,” I replied with a little childish laugh that ended in a long-drawn sigh. “Oh dear ! I wish we were on the sea again ; I was so happy there !” And I clasped his hand timidly.

“Be pacified, Lilian. You shall still be happy if there is power in affection to render you so. You are led here, I trust, for some wise though yet undeveloped purpose, known only to God.”

“I did not know you were a preacher before, Dr. Quintil,” I said, impressed by the solemn fervor of his words, and unconscious of the slightest irony in mine.

A half smile curled his lip. “Nor am I, Lilian—nor am I. *But do not speak to me again just now, for I*—”

The unfinished explanation was not needed. I saw with the quick discernment of childhood, that he was shaken with emotion, and imagination supplied the cause.

"He is afraid some one is dead," I thought. "I would not care if they were all dead ! Then I could live alone with him, in peace, and be his daughter. Oh ! I am sure I shall never love these strangers."

And the memory of those I *had* loved, swept across my soul with surpassing bitterness. I wept aloud.

"Child, child ; this will not do," said Dr. Quintil, almost sternly. "A little patience, a little self-command, are necessary now. What moves you thus ?"

"I was thinking of my grandmother," I answered, wiping my eyes as quickly and quietly as I could. "Oh, Dr. Quintil, you did not see her when she was laid at rest, or you could never forget her ! Such a sweet, noble face ; such snow-white hair, brought low on her thin pale cheeks ; and a smile of such perfect peace lying on her mouth like sunshine on a grave ! I was thinking of her thus, as I shall never see her again."

He listened to me with a grave attention ; yet it seemed to me he was scarcely able to repress a sort of sad smile, peculiar to him, as he inclined his ear to hear me. Strange to say, this encouraged me to proceed, for its source I knew was in sympathy, not derision.

"They say she was very old," I continued ; "and that I ought to be reconciled to her death because of her great age. But I think we love people the more the older they grow ; don't you, Dr. Quintil ?"

"Not always," he said at last. "Old people are often selfish and hard-hearted, and then they surely are not lovely."

"*All* grandmothers must be old," I hazarded. Then added, after a pause, "Is my grandmother Bouverie one of the kind of old people you speak about? Oh, I hope not—I hope not; but I am so afraid." And I clung to his arm with spasmodic anguish.

"Your grandmother Bouverie *old*, my child!" he said, with a sort of amused indignation. "I have never before connected the word with her. We have lived so much together that the process has been a very gradual one—too gradual to be perceptible; and yet, after all, when I consider the matter, she certainly is not *young*, as the word goes. But stay, here we are; I thank you, Lillian, that you so beguiled the way that I scarcely knew how near home we were, and anxious thought was laid at rest."

"And this is to be my home!"

I drew back, and remained buried in shawls in the corner of the carriage, hiding my face with willful perversity, and crying silently yet bitterly.

"Come out, Lillian," said Dr. Quintil, a little sternly, I thought. "Give me your hand, and be calm, if you have any regard for my feelings. There is no time to lose," he whispered. "Look up, here is your uncle Jasper."

I turned. I was composed, with one of those quick impulses familiar to my nature, to my race—an impulse of self-command, if such a term may be applied to that which is usually considered the very antipodes of impulse. I smiled, I stretched forth my hands, and blindly embraced my uncle Jasper, and was strained silently to his bosom.

"Now come to your grandmother," said Dr. Quintil; "and Jasper, how—how are all of you?" He paused a moment, holding my hand tightly in his. I did not hear Jasper's reply, but judged it favorable from the hearty "Thank God!" that seemed

to burst from the very depths of Dr. Quintil's heart. We passed from the vestibule into a large circular hall, and, traversing this, entered and crossed an oblong passage, from which a door immediately before us gave into my grandmother's chamber.

It was half open, and I caught a glimpse of a lady walking the floor in evident agitation, before we entered. She came rapidly forward when she saw us, gave both her hands to Dr. Quintil without speaking, and then, stooping down, embraced me tenderly yet still in silence.

Drawing me back toward the broad window that opened almost half of the whole end of the room, she unloosed the ribbons of my travelling-hood, and laid it by ; then, putting back my hair, gazed earnestly into my face, murmuring—perhaps unconsciously—of the impressions she received from the close, long scrutiny.

"A fair young face ! not beautiful, perhaps, but better thus—frank, and true, and strong ; a face to be relied on—nothing of *him*." These expressions seemed to drop from her lips rather than to be spoken with any direction of the will. Rallying suddenly from this mood of soliloquy, she smiled, and said, in more natural tones :

"Lilian, you do not resemble any relatives that I have seen of yours. I find you a De Courcy, I suppose?"

"Yes, grandmother, so they say of me."

"The bloody glove is no heritage of yours, in any case," she said, taking my hand, and speaking again in low and self-directed accents. She found it cold, and led me to the hearth, where an early autumn fire had been kindled—more, it appeared, for cheerfulness than needful warmth ; and I sat well pleased in the blaze of the crackling aromatic branches.

*Dr. Quintil was already seated, stretching his hands over the*

ruddy fagots, and wearing the sad and dissatisfied expression of weariness and fatigue. She paused beside him, and laid one hand kindly upon his forehead, as a mother or sister might have done.

"I fear that you are not well, Quintil," she said. "You seem anxious, depressed ; what ails you, my dear friend ?"

"It is nothing, madam," he replied, reviving under the influence of her touch, her words. "Nothing but the natural change that action makes in all dreamers and solitary people, when they go out, wholly unprepared, into the great whirl of life, and feel themselves, for the time, no more than dead leaves in the current.

"The reaction after such excitement is wearisome, nevertheless. Oh ! Paul, I *would* your sphere of existence were widened. Your powers demand this ; they rust, they corrode you here."

"Madam, you mistake me ; the harbor of home suits me best. I am ill at ease elsewhere, and yearn for rest."

She sat down between us. "I will not question you now," she said ; "but after awhile, when your spirits find their tranquil level again, I know you will have much to tell me. We shall have many happy evenings this winter, talking over this distant pilgrimage in search of 'treasure trove.' And Lillian too," she added, turning to me with her brilliant smile, "shall contribute her recitals for our enjoyment."

I looked steadfastly upon her without replying, and as the red firelight fell over her as a crimson mantle, sparkling back from her flashing dark eyes, white teeth and mobile lips, I thought I had never seen so beautiful a woman. Lady Torrington, even, as she swept past Taunton Tower on her grey charger, dressed in her hunting dress of green and scarlet, had never seemed so radiant to me ; and I wondered within myself, not *reflecting on the vast difference of years between them, what had*

made one of my grandmothers infirm and aged, and sealed unflinching youth and beauty on the brow of the other! I thought of the man who drank of the waters of eternal youth—wondered whether “Ponce de Leon” had indeed succeeded in discovering a fountain of this kind in Florida, as I had read he did in some old history or legend of his life; and finally, following out the tissue of thought until it assumed another shape, spoke aloud:

“Grandmother, did my mother look like you?”

She hesitated; then answered hurriedly: “I do not know, my child, I never saw your mother after she was one day old, save in a vision of fearful reality.” Again she paused, with her hands folded on her knee, and gazed fixedly into the fire.

“Her pictures do not resemble me,” she resumed in a sort of dreaming way, shaking her head slowly, “not in the least, Lilian; her features seem to have been her *father's*!”

I was checked from further remark by the shadow of ineffable grief that seemed to fall over my grandmother's face as she spoke these words.

The light died from her eyes; her cheek—her lips grew wan, and even shrunken, as though the impress of that age which her beauty defied, had suddenly fixed itself irresistibly on every feature.

But at the first change in the conversation she raised her head, so buoyantly and elegantly placed that it conveyed the impression to the beholder of constantly renewed hope and expectancy; the color returned to her cheek, the light to her eye; her youth seemed restored to her, as by some magic process. I did not then define, as I am doing now, these changes in expression that so powerfully ruled her aspect; the effect was all I recognized. *It must have been later—when these things began to*

assume more importance in my sight—that I remarked the rare perfection of her foot and hand, her noble throat and neck, her still symmetrical, though no longer strictly slender waist. At first I was struck only by her grace and beauty, as they diffused themselves over her whole mien and expression, and the look of truth, of pride, of power, that beamed from her features.

“But, my uncle Jasper!”

Surely no face of angel traced by the hand of Raphael, no aspect of holy martyr transfigured into beauty by the near approach to heaven, was ever more lovely, more divine than his!

The large, clear blue eyes, the waving chestnut hair, tinged with sunshine, the ivory complexion, the exquisite profile, feminine yet not effeminate; the mouth rigidly beautiful, as if from suffering and determined endurance—these in their fullness struck me then—in their detail later; but when he rose I saw that he was writhed and shrunken on one side of his figure, and that he leaned upon his cane habitually, whether standing or walking. Yet, beautiful as were both mother and son, they did not greatly resemble each other, either in manner, expression or physical construction. That slender form, that angelic face, must have been my uncle Jasper's heritage from another parent long laid in dust, the very mention of whose name seemed to throw a shadow over the household of Bouverie.

## CHAPTER II

My grandmother's spacious bed-room, ending in a half octagon, formed a central projection from the rear of the building. Three doors opened into this apartment from the sides that joined the house, and presented a stiff array, separated as they were by wide panels lined with mirrors. The central door opened with leaves into a square or rather oblong hall; the others, narrower and of simpler construction, gave into small rooms, evidently partitioned from the hall for convenience rather than symmetry, since the effect to the eye must have been far more liberal when the passage swept across the house, as I knew afterward it had originally done. One of these chambers, some twelve feet square only, yet lofty and well ventilated, had been fitted up for me with a care and taste that left me nothing to regret, even when I compared it with the comfort and luxury of my former home. That which I supposed to correspond with it on the other side (which indeed the form and size of the mansion made evidently the case), was kept strictly locked; and at first I conceived it to be my grandmother's oratory—recalling that of the mistress of Taunton Tower—or study, perhaps, where books and paintings, sacred to her eye alone, were cautiously concealed, as I had heard was the custom among the authors and artists of the world.

But my grandmother, I soon discovered, was neither the one nor the other; and when I found how simple and even homely were the details of her every-day life, I descended from my pedestal of fancy, and determined that this "Blue beard chamber,"



so mysterious and inaccessible to me, was nothing more or less than a shy woman's dressing-room. A deep reticence of nature did indeed *underlie*, in a very remarkable degree, the sparkling cordiality of my grandmother's manner. You stumbled on this constitutional or habitual reserve, accidentally sometimes, as you might do on a stone hid in a bed of flowers, and with something of the same sharp sudden anguish ; but I am digressing to speak of this now. I wish to give at once, for reasons that will be plainer hereafter, as correct an idea as I know how to convey by words, of the construction of the house of Bouverie.

The central building, as seen from without, built as it was of the dun-colored sandstone common to that region, consisted of two stories surmounted by a circular dome or cupola. A glitter on the roof of this superstructure, which was observable at some distance from the mansion, pointed to the idea of a skylight or glass framework, which might in the beginning have lit the lower as well as the upper hall, if such indeed existed. No evidence that an upper floor formed any portion of the house was afforded by its internal construction ; it contained no stairway, and the circular hall of entrance was ceiled over, so as to shut out all connection with that which might have been supposed to lie above it.

The house was built in the outline of a disproportioned cross in which the small square vestibule in front, my grandmother's projecting chamber in the rear, and the two long wings, containing severally the gentlemen's apartments and accommodations and offices for servants, represented the four limbs. The main building contained only, as far as the eye could see within, the central circular hall to which I have already referred, and one large room on *either hand* opening from this rotunda, and made square, or

rather oblong, by means of triangular closets. The lateral hall, with its divided chambers, completed the quadrangle.

I understood later how it was that after her husband's death, one of violence and horror it was whispered, my grandmother had cut off all communication with those upper rooms which he had chiefly inhabited, associated in her mind as they were with bloodshed and self-slaughter; and how, as the dark legend crept stealthily around, that night after night he might still be heard walking their floors, and had even been seen descending the spiral stairs that linked one circular hall with the other, while the moon shone down through the great skylight, revealing to the startled watchers his ghastly lineaments and spectral form—she had, in the desperation of her fear and agony, sealed up forever those haunted and accursed chambers. For this purpose the stairway had been removed, and the space between the two halls floored and ceiled. This was done with an expedition that made food for conjecture in the neighborhood, having its origin, doubtless, in the almost frenzied terror of her own sensations, that caused her to spare neither expense nor urgency to have her alterations executed with dispatch. The workmen who performed this task were summoned from a distant town, and spoke in a foreign tongue. They came and went like shadows; and in this manner he evaded, as much as possible, the neighborhood gossip and espionage which must otherwise have so annoyed her in her crushed condition. For, at the time all this was done, my grandfather's fearful death was recent; and the same artisans who removed the stairs, and sealed away from sight and access those abhorred upper apartments, placed the simple marble obelisk which bore his name, above his grave in the cedar grove.

*A great lamp swung in the centre of that circular hall now,*

where the sunlight and moonlight had once streamed freely down from the transparent roof ; and the restless ghost might walk forever in those large dim chambers, with their nailed-up windows and disused and mouldering furniture, and disquiet no one.

"Not one article was touched or brought away, Miss Lilian, that ever belonged to *him*," added my informant in low whispered tones, the old demure, and yet gossiping woman who assisted at my toilet, and who had lived with my grandmother and cared for her since her birth ; "not one article, lest a curse might cleave to it and fall on *us* ; and still he may be heard at times—don't be frightened, Miss Lilian !—walking, walking, the livelong night, the livelong day even, as though no rest were granted him in the other world, who took no rest in this."

I had hidden my face on Dame Bianca's arm as she proceeded in her vague narration, thrilled by a momentary terror. Now I looked up and was annoyed by the expression of her countenance as my sudden glance fell upon it. She seemed to be enjoying the emotion she had inspired me with, and a furtive and half suppressed smile lurked on her lips and in her eyes that shook my confidence in the sincerity of her representations.

"She is trying to fool me," I thought, "with this ghost-story, and to make a coward of me ; but I *know* there is nothing of the kind."

And nerved by this sudden conviction, I proceeded to question her with more coolness and sagacity than she could have expected from one evidently so impressed with her narration a moment before.

"What made my grandfather so restless, Dame Bianca ?" I asked. "Was he unhappy and wicked, or only busy ?"

"*All, child, all !* wretched enough, I daressay, when he stopped

to think of his misdeeds—and busy *always* as any working-bee in summer-time. Busy with hand and brain, with pen and sword, with drug and pistol, reading, and thinking, and plotting and contriving; and trampling over every one that stood in his way, without fear or mercy. But he was a great gentleman after all, more like a prince than a common man it appeared to me, and so grand in his ways, that no man could ever take a liberty with him, not even the old master, Ursa Bouverie, that had no respect for any one else, and trod on human feelings as a horse treads on grass. Old ‘Ursa Major,’ they call him hereabouts; but I never could see the sense of putting his title last; ‘Major Ursa’ would have sounded better, I think, Miss Lilian?”

“Why, that means the great bear, Bianca,” I said, laughing heartily at the conceit, and entirely roused from the horrors of her narrative; forgetting too, in my amusement, the pique her expression of triumph had occasioned me when she felt sure of my credulity. “An excellent title, I have no doubt, for the cross old man—Ursa! what a funny name for a Christian!”

“He was no Christian, Miss Lilian,” she said gravely; “but a dreadful old heathen as the Lord ever permitted to live! I never knew how it was that your grandfather crept into his feelings so toward the last, unless it was”—and she hesitated, then digressed abruptly. “‘She shall have a home of her own, if my act can give it to her,’ I heard him say one night about a week before he died, when your grandfather—his nephew, you know, child, he was—was talking with him about making his will in the library, and he slammed his hand down *just so* on the table till it shook again! ‘Shall I insert the clause now, uncle?’ I heard Mr. Erastus Bouverie say in his soft sweet tones, more like trick-

ling water or falling silver than any other sound I ever heard.  
'Or shall it be done later?'

"'You need not trouble yourself about it *at all*, Erastus,' the old man answered; 'after all your objections, it might give you too much pain; or maybe, you might *accidentally* leave a flaw.' And old 'Ursa Major,' laughed long and loud."

"Oh, Bianca, that was very insulting to say to his nephew, I think."

"Not for him, Miss Lilian, who never had a civil word for any one except Miss Camilla; but her he fairly worshipped. Anyway, the look he got that night from Mister Erastus would have killed any one else outright. Few people could stand before your grandfather's eyes, I tell you, my child; but he said nothing on this occasion, but went on writing. I have heard them say that knew his disposition best, that he never justified himself in any way but *one*."

"And that *one*, Bianca?"

"Never mind, Miss Lilian, *what* that was, it was a dreadful way at the best; but as I was saying, he kept on writing in silence. The old man did not live long afterward; he died suddenly, you know, but he did not forget to add the clause, and that was the way your grandmother came to own Bouverie."

"But where were you all the time, Bianca, to see and hear so much? Were you hid away to spy and to listen, Bianca? Oh, I hope not, for the credit of our house."

"Busy in the next room, child, and the door ajar between; but if you hold such suspicions, you may learn the rest for yourself." And the injured dame drew up her slight, erect figure in an attitude that indicated fixed resolution; nor could I hope to

learn from any other source the unfinished history I burned to know.

A little scene had been enacted before this conversation occurred with Bianca, which taught me the necessity of self-control in the household of Bouverie, both as to question and remark. I could not venture, after this, to inquire of any member of the family concerning my grandfather's fate or the events of his life, in view of the lesson that my own indiscretion had taught me.

It was on the day after my arrival, that, sitting at the supper-table, during a long pause in the conversation, and while my grandmother was especially engaged with her coffee-urn, I was suddenly shaken by one of those unseasonable fits of laughter common to excitable children.

"What amuses you, Lillian?" asked Dr. Quintil. "Come, give us your merry thought, and we will pluck it together."

"Oh, Dr. Quintil, I was only thinking how funny it was—and I never thought of it until this minute, which makes it funnier still—that my uncle Jasper has never spoken one word to me since I came to Bouverie! Not *one word*, Mister Jasper, have you said to your niece since she came to live with you, either for good or for bad," and I shook my finger playfully at him across the table.

He gazed at me a moment earnestly, and then suffered his forehead to droop into his hands. Had I offended him? I looked anxiously at Dr. Quintil; he, too, was pale and grave, and averted his eyes from mine. My grandmother alone retained her self-possession.

"My child," she said, "in this house, above all others, learn to be discreet. It is our misfortune to be an afflicted household,—*Jasper has never spoken.*"

I dropped the untasted morsel, and, in a passion of grief and mortification, I slid from the table, and lay with my face on the floor. I was raised by kindly hands. Jasper held me in his arms.

"Oh, what have I done !" I said ; " I did not know—indeed I did not know—that one might hear, and still be dumb. Poor Uncle Jasper ! Can you forgive me ?"

Words never spoke as his eyes spoke to me then. I have since believed that in the spirit-world there will be no need of speech, but that light, shining from each heavenly visage, shall reveal whatever the immortal essence seeks to communicate, and words be put away with other bonds of flesh. He held me to his bosom long, for my feelings, when once vividly aroused, were not easily consoled to quiet again ; and they told me that on that home of peace I sobbed myself to rest.

Jasper—my Jasper—from that hour I loved thee as entirely as I shall ever do when we meet at the feet of God !

## CHAPTER III.

I KNEW that all who cared for me in England were dead, and that my hopes and affections must now, for my own happiness, be centred in the household of Bouverie. My father's relative, who inherited Taunton Tower, had been long in India. He was old, childless, diseased, and totally alienated, as they told me, from family and country. He had not thought of me, except as an encumbrance in my double orphanhood, and must have been relieved to find me swept out of sight when he came to take possession of his heritage.

My father had been an only son, and my mother—placed at school with his young sisters, under the private tutelage of Madame Ambrose, an aunt of his—had early attracted him, and secured, as they grew up together, a place in his deepest affections. Known, as she was, to his family from infancy to youth, and even instantly related to them through her father, they received her gladly as his wife, and accorded her at once a place among themselves as one of themselves.

They were married at his majority, and in her earliest girlhood, as was best for her, motherless as she was supposed to be, and protected only by her aged relative, Madame Ambrose—then approaching her end—and a father, whose rare visits were made from a distant land, and with erratic irregularity. This father, it is true, provided liberally for her education and necessities, and had impressed all who saw him in his brief visits to his child as a man of elegance and refinement befitting his name and English



connections. Yet he was an alien, and some stringent reason, of a nature perhaps too delicate to be revealed to strangers, or more than surmised by them, prevented him from inviting his daughter to share his American home. Half suspected, as this reason was, it was one that offered no impediment to honorable marriage on her part, and so, with the blessing of mother and sisters, Morn Bouverie was united to Edward De Courcy.

In the first year of marriage one of the fair sisters of my father faded away in consumption; the other, splendidly beautiful, and of a haughty and wayward spirit, fled with, and was married to, Lord Torrington, the hereditary foeman of her race. He was a man of notorious character, of more than double her own age—the divorced husband of one wife, the slayer and oppressor, it was believed, of another, the abhorred of all right-minded and honorable men. How he had found means to approach and woo her was never known; yet in his fastness of the mountains—the frowning and almost inaccessible castle—they lived without society, and, as far as could be judged of by outsiders, in harmony, if not affection. He was a stern, superb-looking man, as I remember him, heading the hunt, as it swept by Taunton Tower; and to the magnificent presence of his wife, as she followed fast upon his steps, I have elsewhere alluded. All the romance in my young heart was kindled by the sight of this beautiful kinswoman, to whom I dared not speak or even allude; who was, indeed, consigned to deeper oblivion than the grave affords to the beloved dead, from the day of her headstrong marriage, by the whole of her offended family.

In the fatal severing of other ties, my mother was folded with true maternal love to the heart of my grandmother De Courcy. *Alas!* another year saw her also lying a pale still corpse, with

willing infant beside her, motherless from its first dawn of life, and, as if fate were never weary of sacrifice in that devoted household, two years later Edward de Courcy was lost, sailing in his summer boat, on one of the romantic lochs near Taunton Tower, and in sight of assistance, some said, from Torrington Castle, coldly, vengefully withheld. By this very act, or the suspicion of it, any possibility of reconciliation was forever shut off between the offending daughter and the unhappy mother, who now took to her bosom for all comfort, the feeble infant her son had left, made poor and dependent by his untimely death.

For, as I have elsewhere said, the estates passed to *male heir* collaterals.

My parents were but dreams to me, even when described in such earnest language as my grandmother De Courcy could command ; nor did her care and affection leave any feeling of my heart unsatisfied, or room for the faintest regret to harbor there. It was not until she too was cut off by the hand of death that all my desolation and woeful orphanage flashed over me, with a suddenness that almost changed my nature, and converted its childish confidence to gall and wormwood, and age, if experience be such.

The coarse, unfeeling speculations of strangers as to what would become of me, freely uttered before me, with that strange misapprehension of a child's capacity to feel and to suffer, that belongs to commonplace natures and matter-of-fact thinkers, wherever they may be found, had stung me to agony ; and when I heard the letter of Colonel de Courcy read aloud, in which he expressed the *hope*, that I would be suitably provided for before he came, "at the parsonage, or somewhere else"—a letter written to the land steward of the estate, my grandmother's

-servant, as I had ever esteemed him !—all the pride and sorrow my soul surged to the surface, and I, a child of scarcely two years old, thought sternly of suicide ! That lake in which my father found a grave, would afford a refuge for his child. I would go down into its deep dark waters, and be at rest ; yea, eternally ! God would not be angry with me ; he knew what I was suffering, and I should be restored to those I loved—to my grandmother—my forgotten, but idolized father and mother, now smiling amid the angels !

There was no place in the world for me, it seemed, better than the cottage of Bridget, my nurse, with its coarse surroundings, unless indeed the grim portal of Torrington Castle were opened to me ; that prison-house of pride and sin, as my beloved grandmother had described it, from which kindred eyes had looked down upon and mocked my father's death-struggles !

Not there—not there ! Better the still tarn, or the dim, sepulchral vault at Taunton Tower, where at least, I, as one of that proud race, had a *right* to lie in death, than life in those walls, with sin and hardness of heart as my companions.

I was crouching under one of the old stone pillars that supported the gate of entrance to the outer park of Taunton Tower, while thoughts like these swayed my being. I was thinking of the cold, deep water—the plunge, the shock—then the long *sweet* sleep, and the awakening in Heaven ; with all the earnestness a perfect faith in the resurrection could impress on my nature, and with something very near a fixed determination in my heart to tempt my fate, when I heard a voice speaking beside me. The words it uttered were lost to my ear, but they aroused me fully. I arose to my feet with a conscious individuality that belonged to me even as a child, and always commanded me in any sudden

ted, as if self-defence were my birthright, and mankind my hereditary foemen, and looked full upon the stranger.

He was evidently a traveller. The horse he led was a tired creature, and he was covered with the dust that the wild wind of that September day—for the sun then was just crossing the line—whirled over every object ; and as he looked into my face with his clear grey eyes, wistfully, anxiously even, I felt my heart for the first time for many days, heave in my bosom—it had lain like a stone before—with renewed vitality.

I will not linger on this interview, nor on its strange disclosures. Then first I heard that another grandmother, in a foreign land, was stretching out her arms for me. My mother's father, I knew had been long dead, and of other relatives of hers I had never been informed. Then first, since the death of my grandmother De Courcy, months before, I felt that there still remained to me in this world, hope and affection. Dr. Quintil claimed me, as if I had been a jewel of price, instead of a friendless and almost portionless orphan ; for my grandmother's slender savings, though willed to me, would scarcely have done more than given me bread and raiment in a humble sphere of life ; and thus it came to pass that I was transferred to foreign guardianship, and to a transatlantic home, almost before my bewildered brain could realize the change in my destiny.

On the day before we left Taunton Tower, Dr. Quintil called me into the library, where, in the presence of the magistrates of the parish, he was signing some papers, necessary I believe, to my departure with him as my guardian, when a veiled lady opened the door, looked in, closed it again, and noiselessly withdrew—to reappear, however, a few minutes later, leaning on the arm of a

tall and stately man, whom I recognized at once as Lord Torrington.

My aunt trembled excessively, nor did she once remove her veil during the brief interview that decided my fate. Through her husband's lips her errand there was made known, in a few haughty but not uncourteous words. She asked to adopt me as her child, promising me a mother's care and tenderness—and her low sobs attested to my heart, the sincerity and feeling with which this offer was made.

I will not deny that my whole being yearned to her then, almost irresistibly, and the potent voice of blood cried out within me.

Dr. Quintil, with his calm observing gaze, noted and compassionated the struggle that was going on within.

"Speak, Lilian!" he said; "you only can decide in this matter, so important to your happiness and welfare; but reflect--the step you take now will be irrevocable."

I glanced at Lord Torrington's handsome stormy face. I thought of the sinking boat, and the help refused, and my father cast pallid and dead on the strand below his castle; and my heart was nerved like steel.

"I will go with *you*, Dr. Quintil," I said, stretching my hand to him, which he grasped, and held firmly.

Lady Torrington rose; she tottered rather than walked to the door. I wrested my hand from Dr. Quintil, and rushed after her.

"Stay," I cried, "let me speak to you at least one word, before we part forever. You are the last of my father's kindred, and if you have been cold and cruel, I forgive you now." And I threw my arms around her.

"Cold and cruel, Lilian! Oh, who has said this of me?"

Blighted and miserable, say rather," she murmured, as she clutched me to her breast in an embrace of straining agony. "And alone, utterly alone, in the world."

"Aunt, I could have loved you so dearly," I said, sobbing ;  
"but now "——

"Go," she said, "with that good man, it is best ; be happy. I would ask you to write to me," she added, in whispered accents, "but this would not be permitted. Yet do not wholly forget me."

"It was solely from a wish to save my wife's only surviving relative from contact with *disgrace*, that I united with her in making this absurd proposition, so insolently rejected," I heard Lord Torrington say, as he turned from Dr. Quintil.

"I, who have succeeded in accomplishing this by saving her from *your* hands, can afford to bear your taunts," rejoined Dr. Quintil, coolly. "For the *present*, at least, our paths lie far apart, rude man ; yet we may meet again."

"Do you threaten me, sir ?" asked Lord Torrington, his dark eyes flashing with fury.

"Construe my words as you please," was the calm rejoinder ;  
"*yours* have no power to stir me in any way."

I believe that Lord Torrington would then and there have assaulted the mild man who stood so imperturbably before him, with arms folded on his breast, had not his wife clung wildly to his bosom, entreating him to be pacified.

I ranged myself with Dr. Quintil—my instincts were all on his side ; and something like a wish for battle swelled high in my heart, as I witnessed this brief scene. I felt that day that all the bad and bitter blood within me came to the surface, and that, child as I was, it would have done me good to fight the good fight against my aunt's oppressor, and my father's foe-man.

But, brought to a sudden sense of shame—or fear, who knows!—Lord Torrington swung scornfully on his heel, and left the room with rapid strides, followed by his weeping wife—so different from the stern, haughty woman I had thought her, and lost to me thenceforth forever!

## CHAPTER IV.

My tastes and feelings had readily assimilated with those around me, and my heart had reached out with warmth and gratitude to meet their affection and esteem so unhesitatingly bestowed. It would have been indeed difficult, so circumstanced, to have felt otherwise, without deserving the reproach of humanity itself; yet the shadow that enveloped these people, whose daily elegance of life, culture, and courtesy, placed them so high in the scale of refinement, fell over me also, an alien to its cause. I had that intuitive perception of their grief, that persons with finely constituted nerves possess of the approach of a thunder-storm, though the sky be clear and cloudless. The determination manifested by all around me to make the best of the lees of life, did not deceive me, child as I was, into the belief that the bead was still on their wine.

Yet they inspired me with that respect we involuntarily feel toward those who, in accepting their condition, prove their superiority to fate itself, and disarm destiny of its keenest sting—resistance. Shipwrecked sailors are they who compel themselves to a new existence and a comparative contentment, cut off, as they are, by the nature of things from all long accepted sources of enjoyment—strong swimmers, who have left a wreck, and breasted the surf, to live forever on a desert island.

Those to whom the changes of nature, the freshness of morning, the glory of sunset, the opening of flowers, the tender beauty of the grass, are most pleasing—most suggestive, are not the young,



the gay, the happy. They are those who, having suffered, humbly recognize the beauty and the promise that remain to them, and are placidly thankful for all surroundings that may impress and elevate their thoughts, and, above all, lift them from themselves.

I have seen a strong man, whose life had been a failure, busy himself with newspapers until they seemed an integral part of his existence, with all their fluctuations of political and commercial changes, or merge his very being in the game of chess, until the nature which had stood immovable as a rock against the storms of fortune, grew warped and bitter under defeat, and lost dignity over a disputed move or a checkmate !

And so in the house of Bouverie, where self had long ceased to interest, and individual joy was stagnant, the child that came among them unconscious of their sorrow, and bearing about her a freshness of youth and foreign impulse at variance with all their monastic habits, was to them as a votive altar to gather about and wreath with garlands—a talisman, to while away that sore-soul apathy that, before her coming, must have brooded very heavily indeed over their social existence.

Yet the dignity, the method, of my grandmother's household, suited in turn my native taste, which enjoyed no vulgar excitement. I admired the perfection to which system, and a determination to secure peace as the first of all considerations, had brought her management. Order seemed to have taken the place of happiness at Bouverie, as taste has often been seen to step forward in that of talent with a certain gracefulness which almost persuades one into a belief in their identity. It is true, no stranger's foot ever crossed our threshold to mar the tranquillity of our routine, save that of Bishop Clare—my grandmother's valued friend, and *spiritual guide* ; and it was certainly easier, under these serene

circumstances, to preserve unbroken order, than if guests had been admitted, or the members of the family gone forth and returned frequently. Yet it required patience and system both to draw such results from the elements around her, as obeyed the management of the mistress of Bouverie.

Her servants were old and few—singularly chosen, I thought then ; wisely, I knew, later—and her own hands put the finishing touch that added refinement to neatness, to much of the work of her household. It was my pleasure to aid her in her tasks, and I became, like herself, a proficient in all the light cares of housewifery, and learned to value the variety they afforded in the monotony of our lives.

As members of the household of Bouverie—to which narrow sphere of action my story is chiefly limited—and as not wholly unimportant accessories to the movement of this domestic drama, I will notice here singly, yet as briefly as I may, the humble yet eccentric personages who constituted with us the “second estate.”

Dame Bianca, our personal attendant, was a slight, upright person, still wearing her own dark hair, and bearing traces of beauty peculiar to her Spanish origin, yet having no remembrance of her native land or of its language. She had been thrown, in her orphaned infancy, into the hands of my grandmother's mother, who had reared her tenderly ; and she had been, through life, devoted to her service and that of her daughter, whose senior she was by several years. She was childless, having married late in life, but her husband survived and lived under the same roof ; and she esteemed herself happy in a privilege rarely granted to white servants, considered as it is a mere matter of course by slaves.

*Our cook, a much older woman than Dame Bianca in appear-*

ance, if not in reality, was an Irish virago tamed down by age and infirmity, and a very hag of hideousness and crossness. It was, however, it must be confessed, quite a proficient in her line, and in order to secure her services permanently, she had been allowed to rear and keep her idiotic grandson at Bouverie.

Patrick McCormick had grown old enough to officiate as scullion at first, and finally as hostler even to the saddle horses of Bouverie, for carriage there was none. It was his duty to dress the flower plots, and to bring from the distant house of the gardener and his wife, our laundress, the daily supplies of marketing, vegetables, fruit, poultry and linen, we required. Thus, in some measure, my grandmother's bounty, extended to him through so many useless years, seemed at last repaid. For the rest, his almost ludicrous ugliness and awkwardness unfitted him for house service, and made him a repulsive object to me whenever I encountered him.

He had conceived, from the time of my advent to Bouverie, an almost spaniel-like fondness for me, which occasioned me no little annoyance. He haunted my steps until I was obliged, in self-defence, to drive him sternly back, time after time; and he would stand, on such occasions, looking after me with a wistful sorrow, as you have seen a dog do, repelled by his master, distressed yet not resentful. It was impossible by any other means than those dictated by severity, to assign to this poor, half-sane creature, his proper limits, or to make him recognize his true position. Until rendered afraid to repeat the liberty, by a sound thrashing from Widow McCormick, he would constantly touch, and examine admiringly, the long brown curls that fell over my shoulders.

Once, when I was seated under a tree reading an illustrated book, his large red forefinger was suddenly obtruded on my view

as he pointed childishly over my shoulder to the picture that attracted him, and the spot his soiled touch had left could never be effaced. But this time I dismissed him with a slight rebuke, touched as I was by both his earnestness and penitence; taking care, however, to read illuminated volumes within doors thereafter. It was strange, indeed, to find so keen a sense of the beautiful as he possessed, lying at the bottom of such an imperfectly developed nature.

I have seen the creature lean on his spade, with his lips parted and his gooseberry eyes stretched to their utmost limits, gaping rather than gazing with evident admiration on the setting sun. The sensation of enjoyment was there, unembarrassed by thought of any kind, or power to express it if it existed, otherwise than by mute attention. Where would metaphysicians have placed this instinct of poetry, cut off as it was from all its usual accompaniments, in the case of this half-witted boy? Or how separate the fine silken threads of feeling and loyalty that were woven in the warp of his foolishness, from the coarse fabric itself, or even know where one ended and the other began?

In the absence of a better religion, the poor fellow was the prey of abject superstition, and was witch-ridden to an extent rarely heard of since the days of Cotton Mather! His crude imagination revelled in a kingdom of its own, where goblins and ghosts made an absolute despotism, and held him in serf-like bondage; and his only feeling of enmity was directed against these supernatural foes. Charms and talismans of all kinds were gathered around his person for the purpose of destroying the power of these tormenting visitors, whose wish to possess him certainly indicated a degree of disinterestedness on their part, unusual in their organization, and worthy of a better cause.

I have lingered thus long over the portrait of this "half-savage" lad, for reasons that may be plainer hereafter. There remained but one additional member of the corps of domestics to be introduced, a man machine, if ever there was such a creation, pursuing his tasks so literally, so mechanically as almost to persuade one that the click of the clockwork that impelled him could be heard as he glided along. Something peculiar and mysterious seemed to attach to his presence and movements, that was increased by the reserve and rigidity of his deportment. He was of medium height, slight, pallid, withered, yet with two bright spots glowing on his cheeks, vivid as if painted there, and hectic as the color of the autumn leaf. His eyes were blue, glassy, inexpressive, and usually directed into space, if such a term might be applied to their indefinite stare; yet with these incomprehensive-looking eyes of his I ascertained later, that he saw everything that went on. His hair was of a strange yellowish white, in which the gold of youth still contended strongly with the inevitable silver of age, and was worn in short tufted curls, so as to display the whole of his flat, unmeaning forehead. He reminded me of a faded wax doll, or a picture poorly painted in water-colors, that one wipe of the hand would obliterate altogether. His smile consisted of a contraction or pucker of the lips, instead of labial expansion, and recalled that mixture both sour and saccharine that housewives call sweet pickle. It was his province to lay the cloth and serve the meals, after fulfilling which duties he invariably disappeared, to pursue what further employment I knew not and did not inquire.

It was long before I became aware that this peculiar individual had been the body-servant of my grandfather, and was the husband of Dame Bianca. They called him Fabius.

*Each day had its accustomed routine at Bouverie. As soon as*

breakfast was over, and the light task of disposing of the fine and carefully preserved china, in which I assisted my grandmother, at an end, I withdrew with Dr. Quintil to the study in the wing, and there received his instruction in various branches. Companionless, I had no other resource than books afforded me, and the love of knowledge became with me an absorbing passion rather than an occupation.

Jasper usually sat in the same room in which I was taught, pursuing his separate studies, and entirely engrossed by the volumes he pored over, to the exclusion of voices and other disturbing causes. He had, indeed, that power of application in an uncommon degree, which by some French authors, Montesquieu, I believe, has been used as a definition of genius. If the meaning be extended so as to cover the ground of the application of knowledge after its acquirement—the result of application of mind—to all occasions of life, this definition may be found to possess merit, and even originality, and to answer as well as most that have been accepted as expositions of that Protean gift of which Prometheus was the antique type.

At noon, when study hours were over for the day, I sought my grandmother's chamber, and found her usually seated at her work by the large window I have before described; while the little repast of fruit, or cake, or conserves, she never forgot to provide for me, was placed on the table by her side. When I had partaken of this I was free to go, to ride my pony, to walk, to swing, and gather flowers in the fine season; or in winter, to exercise in the basement below, kept warm for the benefit of the flowering plants it sheltered, or to pore over the volumed lore of the library, until our late dinner hour arrived, or to play and sing *my piano*, unquestioned and unnoticed; for my grandmother

knew better than most persons, how important to the growth and dignity of a child's character, is a certain freedom of action and solitary self-reliance.

I still look back to those lonely hours, as the basis of ~~much~~ that is strong and resolute in my character, and as the promoters, if not originators, of that poetic faculty which, however limited in its results, has been my chief comfort and resource in life—a faculty I would not surrender for Victoria's crown, were I obliged to fill its place with commonplace and inanity, and which, more than all else, has reconciled me to life, and assured me of the certainty of a glorious immortality.

A great orator has lately in his eulogium on the most distinguished statesman of any age, in his zeal for those qualities which peculiarly appertained to the character of the august subject of his debate, levelled cold and cruel blows at the peculiar organization to which we give the name of "genius." When God takes back his gift of flowers, limits sunshine, wipes out the rainbow, dashes from the shell and gem their lustre, and from the bird the hues of his glorious plumage, replacing these with cold, *utilitarian* coloring ; when the love of the beautiful—the germ of all poetic power—ceases to lift the human heart to Him who adorned the world with such exquisite consideration for this master passion of his noblest creatures—including as it does, love, heroism, religion, glory—then, and not until *then*, shall I believe that genius is superfluous ; and that in the eyes of the Creator it is of little or no avail !

Dr. Kane, sailing on the lonely Arctic seas, renders ~~meet~~ tribute to the comfort that genius gives him ; I use the word advisedly !

"None," says he, "who have not read the poems of Tennyson

Under circumstances of isolation like those that surrounded me, can form any idea of the *consolation* to be derived from their perusal."

These are not his exact words—I do not own these volumes—but any one can find the passage I refer to with such a clew. Following out the impulse of his gratitude, he calls by the name of his favorite poet, the wondrous column of green basalt that stands forth as if made by the hand of human art, bare and terrific even in its strange solitary grandeur, from the cold grey rocks around it, and looms above the lonely glassy ocean of that Arctic zone. This he calls "Tennyson's Monument." What prouder tribute has poet ever received?

Dear as were those solitary hours to me, and life-giving as they proved themselves, the tendency of my nature was essentially social and loyal; and, had I been permitted to do so, I would have attached myself warmly and entirely to my grandmother's society, and even service. But, while with one hand, she drew me to her, with the other she put me away—gently, but no less decidedly.

Her conversation was especially delightful to me—so animated, so varied, so natural, so full of detail, that it was like reading a pleasant book to listen to it. One is said, I know, oftener in derision than in praise, to "talk like a book;" but this is a prejudice derived from old times, when books were oftenest prating and pedantic oracles. Who would not like to hear such conversation daily, as we meet with in the pages of many modern novels? Terse, sparkling, and graphic illustrations of nature itself, compared to which all ancient dialogue seems flat and affected!

I would often linger, as if spell-bound, near my grandmother's *chair*, until almost commanded to leave her; and then drag myself



unwillingly away, wounded and dissatisfied. Yet out of ~~this~~ very mood came forth at last, as I have said, a wonderful self-reliance.

"Lilian," she said to me, one day, when, more than usually fascinated by her discourse, I had established myself on a stool at her feet, with my favorite paper-work, and had been gazing some moments perfectly spell-bound into her speaking face ; "Lilian, I must be cautious ; I am afraid you are beginning to love me a little."

"Beginning, grandmother ! and why not ?" I asked, somewhat indignantly, opening my eyes to their fullest extent, and pausing, with the scissors extended in my right hand, with which I was about to clip the paper-rose I held in my left. "I think it is quite time I should love you."

"Love any one else you please, Lilian," she said, in a low, monotonous tone, wholly different from her usually well-modulated accents ; "love Jasper and Dr. Quintil with all your heart, and you will get back your treasure with interest. Love Dame Bianca, even, if you can and choose to do so ; but do not love me, Lilian, I beseech you."

Again the question, "why not ?" trembled on my lips ; and now my eyes filled with tears.

"Because it is dangerous to love me," she answered ; "fatal, almost, I fear—a better reason, perhaps, still, because I have no love to give you in return ; nothing but sadness ; my affections are dead, Lilian, my heart lies like a stone in my bosom. My intellect only survives."

"I will love you, then," I said, kneeling on the stool before her, and folding my hands on her knees, while the neglected paper-work strewed the floor beside me, "without asking for any return. I will love you as Mary Magdalene loved Christ, when

she poured sweet ointment on his feet, and heeded no reproaches."

"Your thought is a strange and even beautiful one for a child of your years," she rejoined, "but irreverent, as you apply it. Lillian, it is sinful, extravagant, to make such comparisons;" and she looked at me with severity in her eyes. "You have no right to render such tribute to any creature of dust."

"Tell me, then," I said, stoutly, my cheek flushing from her slight rebuke, or the manner of it—"tell me, then, *why* I am not to love you? Give me a good reason, and I will try to obey you. Grandmother," I continued, fixing my eyes on her in turn, with a steady sternness foreign from their usual expression; "answer me, are you wicked?"

"Child, you are a terrible inquisitor," she said, rising to her feet, and standing before me, in a state of unwonted excitement. "Lillian, I cannot see how one of your tender years could ever conceive such a thought, or utter such a question. Well, let it pass! But this is a stringent word, truly, that you apply to me! No, no—not wicked," she added, in low murmured tones, as she turned to me again; and, pausing, extended her hands, perhaps unconsciously, as if appealing against the harsh judgment. "Sinful we all are—sinful I, too, have been, and chosen—perhaps especially chosen—to bear the burden of the sin of others; but wicked?—not that—not that!" Her words seemed self-directed.

"Then, grandmother," I said, clasping her hands, and standing steadily before her, "you must let me love you, even if you don't care for me, for are you not my mother's own dear mother, and thus nearer than all the world to me?"

She shook her head mournfully. A sudden thought flashed

across me for the first time, then and there, blighting and crushing as lightning. I dropped her hands, I sank to the floor, I clasped her knees, and hid my face among the folds of her garments. I recalled what she had said of her child.

"Oh, answer me truly, grandmother!" I almost groaned.  
"Did you—did you abandon my mother, your helpless baby?"

She did not reply for a moment, but I felt her frame tremble from head to foot, as if my grasp only upheld her. Then stooping down, she raised me from the floor, and spoke with comparative coolness.

"You torture yourself—and *me*, by such doubts—such suggestions, Lilian. The time will come, I trust, when you will think better of me than to question of such matters. Until then, silence your misgivings, and, if you can, believe in me. And now, more than ever, I find it necessary to impress upon you the lesson that gave rise to this painful outbreak of feeling between us. I am in earnest, Lilian, and speak for the welfare of both, when I warn you—counsel you, not to love me. It is a luxury in which I cannot afford to indulge." And she smiled bitterly.

"Gather up your papers, Lilian," she said calmly, a moment later, seeing that I still stood before her, silent and irresolute, "and go and seek Jasper; you will find him better company to-day than I can be."

I obeyed her first injunction. My paper flowers were swept hastily together, to be in the next moment cast in the flames, and consumed before her; and, without lifting my eyes to her face, I passed from her presence, to seek—not Jasper, but the deepest shadow I could find, and to lie mutely at the foot of a cedar-tree for hours.

## CHAPTER V.

WHEN I returned to the house after that long trance-like struggle of feeling, so to speak, in which my spirit had been engaged, while torpid lethargy oppressed my frame, the sun was setting. I knew that I had been sought for during this interval of absence. Jasper had passed mutely twice along the gravelled path that swept not very far from the cedar-tree that sheltered me, without distinguishing my green dress from the abundant periwinkle that clustered around me, and the long cedar boughs that trailed over me ; nor did I care to attract his attention. I had heard Pat McCormick shouting my name at the dinner hour, in different directions ; the long drawn "Miss Lilian," so distorted as to sound like the hooting of an owl, through the medium of his thumbs and imitating fingers, was repeated at intervals afterward, through the whole afternoon ; but of this signal I took no notice.

"What did it matter to me, whether they were seeking me or not ? Let them suffer as I was suffering, if indeed, my absence troubled them. I had believed myself beloved—I had found mere dutiful compassion instead. I was nothing but a charity child to them—to Dr. Quintil, and Jasper, and all—I was *glad* I understood this at last. I should be so hard, so happy now, for to love too much was burdensome, after all !"

And in a current like this my unjust and passionate mood found vent, until the tide ebbed away and left me calm, passive, and almost repentant ; and in this better frame of mind I arose, thoroughly chilled, I must confess, and turned to the house.

I entered through the wing, where the pantry and domestic offices were situated, and stumbled at once over Dame Bianca busily engaged in setting to rights the china and viands, as was her custom after meals.

"La, Miss Lilian, where have you hid yourself?" she exclaimed, with upraised hands! "You that are so regular at meal-times. Dinner has been over this hour—and Bishop Clare here—and such nice cream and pudding," and young broiled chickens, and everything you love on the table—and your grandmother in such a worry about you! Now, Miss Lilian, for shame, to try patience this way! Pat McCormick has just got on a horse to go in search"—

"Do, Dame Bianca, stop scolding," I interrupted, "and give me something to eat. I am almost starved; I know you kept my dinner for me."

"Well, if I did, it was more than you deserved! To go and frighten a body so! How did I know what had become of you, with all that strange, bad Bouverie blood boiling in your veins? Did any one ever know, from one moment to another, what Major Ursa, or Mister Erastus would be at? I ask you that, Miss Lilian?"

"Dame Bianca, you forget that I never knew either of those gentlemen, and that my name is De Courcy—and that," I added savagely, "I have had no dinner, and am half dead for something to eat, and if I can't get my dinner here I can go off again, and"—

"Good Lord, Miss Lilian! do have common patience. Don't you see me fixing your chicken, and your lettuces, and your bread, on one plate so as not to mix"—

I cut short her epicurean fancies by seizing the plate of viands

she extended, and adding half a dozen other articles of food to the daintily arranged chicken and lettuce, and after demolishing these in an incredibly short time, I asked for the cream and pudding.

When I had literally eaten through the bill of fare, I paused, well pleased, from my labors.

"Dame Bianca," I asked, "can you tell me what is better than affection—or fame—or intellect, or any other matter of that sort that people make such a fuss about?"

"Religion, Miss Lilian," she answered with meek simplicity, "that is, the true Catholic faith."

"My friend, you are much mistaken," I said, with an assumption of importance that must have struck even her with its absurdity. "Above all these things is the value and importance of food to the hungry. In short, a good dinner, Bianca!"

She looked at me with a half amused face and said, shaking her head :

"Ah, Miss Lilian! anybody could see who had been your teacher—that sounds mightily like Dr. Quintil."

"Dr. Quintil! I do believe you think all wisdom comes from him, and that the mantle of his namesake has fallen on his shoulders! Can't you give me credit for a little sense of my own?"

"Not much, at your age, dear, not much; and as for Dr. Quintil, he has more sense, and goodness too, than the Apostle Paul ever dared to have."

"Bianca! what impiety!" My Calvinistic blood flashed to my cheek in a moment, and I felt like placing a lance in rest at once for my grandmother De Courcy's Bible hero.

"For didn't he stone the holy St. Stephen, my patron saint—

and Bishop Clare's, too, for that matter," she continued, raising her voice, "just because he hadn't sense or feeling enough to see the truth, until he heard a voice from heaven, crying out to him? If every man had to wait for that to be a Christian, where would the true Church be now, or the merit of Christianity? I ask you that, Miss Lilian?"

"Good heavens, Bianca! let us drop that never-ending theme, 'the true Church,' and give me a light that I may brush my hair, and change my dress before I go to meet that terrible old bug-bear, Bishop Clare."

"Bugbear, Miss Lilian! Bishop Clare a bug-bear!" and her kind eyes filled with tears. She said no more; but lighting the candle, extended it to me with a sort of sorrowful indignation.

I took it and hastened away from her with a rejoicing levity of spirit.

"I mean to be as free as air from this moment," I thought, "and not care for any of them. Ah! grandmother, your lesson is a hard one, but I will learn it well."

I am afraid that something of old *Ursa* Bouverie did peep out from my hidden nature that evening, but there was a rock at hand to crush the serpent's head, and stifle it forever. A rock did I say? Nay, rather a downy shower of roses, a deluge of honey and rosewater, and all fine odors, a perfect avalanche of plumes and pearls, more potent to subdue and smother soul-snakes than all the pelting of sticks and stones. And under this great tempest of tenderness, that wicked scion of old *Ursa* Bouverie yielded up its breath, and left the heart of his descendant open once more to sacred influences and teachings of affection, even as the atmosphere was purified when the genial Sun God slew the Python.

The dining-room, our customary sitting parlor, was empty when I entered it ; but I saw through the open door lights beyond, and following these I soon found myself in the drawing-room, where, for the first time since I came to Bouverie, the family was assembled.

I paused at the open door, a little uncertain as to my reception, and surveyed the scene within. Bishop Clare, for such I could not doubt was the noble, white-haired man who occupied a deep chair in front of the blazing wood fire, was listening with grave attention to some communication my grandmother was making to him in under-tones. Dr. Quintil sat near the shaded lamp, looking over a newspaper; Jasper was walking the apartment, anxiously I thought.

I entered and stood before them.

Jasper saw me first. The sunshine of joy broke over every feature as he came eagerly forward and, clasping my hands in his, pressed them fondly to his breast, then drew me on to my grandmother's chair.

She turned—her great eyes filled with tears—her arm was around me with a half-convulsive pressure, and I thought I heard a smothered sob; but she did not speak until, recovering herself abruptly, she placed my hand in that of Bishop Clare with the simple words:

“This is my Lilian, father.”

“*Our* Lilian say rather, madam, for you shall not begin so late in life to be selfish, even on the plea of relationship.”

“‘Our bird of Bouverie,’ I call her, Bishop Clare ; and you will think so too when you hear her sing,” quoth Dr. Quintil from behind me, placing his hands on my shoulders.

“And what songs do you love best, my daughter,” said the



stately priest; "tell me, for I sometimes judge of character from things like these."

"Scotch songs, chiefly, father, because *she* loved them; but for my own part, there are some I prefer," I faltered.

"And what are those songs, Lilian?"

"I would rather not tell you, father," I answered, looking straight into his clear blue eyes with their magnetic attractiveness. "You might not think so well of me for liking those—Dr. Somers did not; but indeed I cannot help it," I added, laughing.

"Name one, Lilian," said my grandmother; "I would not have Bishop Clare believe that you were ashamed of any song you sing."

"Moore's songs then, if you must know. 'Come rest in this bosom,' grandmother, is a beautiful song I think; but I have been told it was sinful to like it, and since then I never sing it. This was *her* opinion and you know this was enough."

"Certainly, certainly," she replied, "you were right to respect your grandmother De Courcy's sentiments; the song is one of dubious morality I believe," she added; "though, indeed, I never thought of it in that light before. But the music, the old mournful French air of 'Fleuve de Tage,' is very beautiful."

"It is not the music, grandmother, half as much as the words that move me so. You know where the lady says"—

"The lady, Lilian! It certainly is a man's song and conveys a man's sentiments."

"Oh no, grandmother, I am sure it was a lady that said—

'Through the furnace, unshrinking, thy steps I'll pursue,  
And shield thee and save thee, or perish there too.'

**"Her husband, you know, Bishop Clare, was condemned to**

walk through a fiery furnace, by some wicked king I suppose, and she would not forsake him."

"And you like this sentiment, Lilian, which you take so literally?" said Bishop Clare. "This is what you would have done under like circumstances?"

"I think so," I answered low, but my eyes fell beneath his long, sad gaze, as clasping my wrist he held me before him, and pored on my face as on an open book. When I looked up again he had relaxed his hold—Dr. Quintil had retreated—and I went to take my seat by my grandmother. There was deep silence. I looked inquiringly into her face. Had I unwittingly offended? I could not ask in words, and no answer was rendered to my appealing gaze; but I saw that every ray of color had died from her cheek, and that her features were rigid and lifeless, and that she held her hand closely pressed to her heart. The mood passed over; she was the first to speak.

"After all, these are very old-fashioned songs, Lilian; I must get some new ones for you. I am told the modern music is exquisite, and some rare songs have been written recently—some by Barry Cornwall."

"But I love the old ones so well, grandmother, there is no need for new. Besides, I do not learn strange music readily."

"That piece of song, that old and antique song we heard last night," soliloquized Dr. Quintil as he walked the room in the shadow and the background, half hearing our subject of conversation, half absorbed in his own reflections—a sort of double-sided mood habitual with him, and peculiar to his temperament.

Jasper smiled as he followed him with his eyes, and enjoyed the oddity of his humor with that sort of playful irony that springs only from *true affection*. Then rising after a time, he approached

him, throwing his arm up over his shoulder, and joined his purposeless promenade, as if to be near him were a necessity of the moment that could not be controlled, and which sufficed for his happiness without any further communion between them.

I have rarely seen love like theirs!

"You have removed your piano, Camilla," said Father Clare, looking around.

"Lilian practises in the library; we keep no fire here, habitually; besides, it is best—you know the old prejudices," and she dropped her voice.

"I did not reflect," I heard him say in low accents; "it certainly is best to confine music lessons to the wing, under existing circumstances."

"I teach her as well as I can," she pursued; "but her musical ability far exceeds my own. I fear I am of but little use to her, in this capacity, at least. Yet it is such a pleasure to both of us!"

"An innocent one, I am sure," my children; and, as such, fear not to enjoy it while you may," he said, extending his hand to me, and drawing me before him again as he spoke; "but, to-morrow, I must have a sample of this bird's singing: we may want her yet in the choir as a leader. And now, stand still, Lilian, I wish to look at you again. Nay, do not smile, I desire to see your face in repose."

I obeyed him, standing motionless before him, and looking again full into his calm blue eyes until he had completed his inspection. "Self-command there," he said low; then added aloud, "she does not resemble you, Camilla, nor any one else of her kindred that I have known. This is a new face in the household of *Bouverie*."

"She is said to be like her father," my grandmother replied ; "at least as to feature ; and I am glad of this—glad at least that she is not like me. I am so tired of my own face that I never want to see it repeated."

"Except in the glass, grandmother," I said, laughing, as I rose to cross the room to sit by Dr. Quintil—now weary of sauntering—accepting at last his mute but oft-repeated invitation.

Father Clare smiled at this parting sally—"Parthian dart," he called it.

"She knows your besetting weakness, Camilla, as well as if she were your confessor," I heard him say.

"Oh ! father, that is all over long ago," she said, shaking her head ; "the glass is now to me only a habitual assistant, and a monitor. The glory has departed !" And she smiled sadly

Dr. Quintil wanted to lecture me—and I knew he called me for this purpose—about my escapade of the morning, and my want of punctuality at the dinner hour.

"What could have occurred, Lillian, to justify such a proceeding ? What had your grandmother done to wound you—she who is usually so careful of the feelings of every one ?" I did not answer this inquiry, and he went on : "Do you know that you afflict her dreadfully—she who already has so much to bear, when you behave in this thoughtless way ? I can tell you, Lillian, you assume a great responsibility."

"And I—do you suppose I have no feeling because you call me a child ?" I asked in turn. "Does she think she can whistle me to her like a little dog, when she wants me ; and drive me away, when she is tired of amusing herself ? No, Dr. Quintil, she can never do it again !"

"This is very strange—I do not understand you at all. Your

grandmother is fond of you, that is evident ; kind in her manner—remarkably so. Of what do you complain ?”

“I make no complaint—I mean to make none ; I have only expected too much—that was all ; but I thought, gold for gold, and love for love, was true, all the world over.”

“Lilian, be patient. You do not see into things yet, except darkly, as through a glass ; after a while all will be made plain to you that troubles and perplexes you now. Your grandmother has many sorrows, and has been truly ‘acquainted with grief.’ You must make every allowance for this. Your fault is overbearing impetuosity—you must bridle this for your own happiness, if not for ours. But no more of this. Have faith in those around you, and be obedient, and peace will follow as certainly as day comes out of darkness.”

“Oh ! Dr. Quintil,” I said, thoroughly overcome, “I could have loved her so dearly, but she would not suffer it !” Sobs choked my utterance, and the tears rolled over my cheeks.

“Command yourself, or you will be observed,” he said, in gentle accents ; “*learn* to command yourself. See, Jasper is watching you, and you will make him unhappy—he, poor fellow, so devoted to you.”

“He is, indeed !” I murmured, wiping my eyes quietly. “I would not distress him for the world, and, if I have said anything rash, do, dear Dr. Quintil, forgive me—I am sorry.”

“All is over,” he said hurriedly. “Let us not allude to this matter again ; but, remember, you are always our own dear Lilian, whatever may betide.”

And, rising from the sofa, he gaily challenged Bishop Clare to play chess with him. “Bring the board, Lilian, love, from the dining-room, and don’t forget the men ! The part of Hamlet is

not left out 'by request,' this time. Jasper, the stand, if you please ; now place the candles—there, we are ready. Luther against the Pope."

"A bad jest, Quintil," said the reverend man, shaking his white locks, as he seated himself opposite his opponent. "A sorry jest, even for a Puritan to utter—and this is saying much."

"Now, woe to the scarlet woman !" said the imperturbable Calvinist, as he moved a white pawn two steps in front of his king, and eyed with vengeful glances the opposing queen.

## CHAPTER VI.

I HAD been six months at Bouverie at the period of Bishop Clare's visit, delayed, as it was, by his absence in the South. It was his custom to make a quarterly visit to my grandmother, when not prevented by imperative duties, and remain some days on such occasions. He was indeed the only intimate friend she possessed outside of her own household, and had been her spiritual guide from childhood ; and, in temporal affairs, had assumed a father's place toward her on various trying occasions.

He was, at the period of our first acquaintance, more than seventy years old, nor had time withheld one attribute of his age. His figure, still stately with its remnant of vigorous proportion, was bowed not more by the weight of years than that of the harness he had worn as a vowed soldier of the Cross. His habits were frugal as those of a Carmelite monk, and hardy as a Highlander's ; nor had he ever been known to flinch or falter in any battle of life, from contumely *down* to epidemic—for it was on this scale he considered moral and physical evil. For the rest, he was not the metaphysical scholar that many of his order unquestionably are, but had freely given forth all his powers to the great, active and practical needs of man, feeling it as much his duty to sustain the starving pauper, when bread was his to give, as to minister to the perishing soul ; and recognizing the imperative claims of his religion, wherever sorrow or misfortune existed.

Such was this simple Apostolic man. How little I thought when I saw my still strong and beautiful grandmother standing

by the venerable priest, then apparently fast descending the la-  
slope of life, and mentally contrasted their appearance, that  
would be his task to lay her head in the grave, with the rites o  
their ancient church ! I could not connect age or infirmity wit  
one so self-poised, so vigorous, as she seemed to be—so full of  
nameless power that diffused itself over her whole being and a  
pearance, and which nothing I have read so well expressed a  
Miss Bailie's description of Jane de Montfort, in her tragedy o  
"Hate."

A page announces to the Lady Freberg, in the presence of he  
husband, that a lady waits without to see her ; and she question  
him about her, thus :

*Lady Freberg.* "Page, is she young or old?"

*Page.* "Neither, if right I guess ; but she is fair,  
For Time has laid his hand so gently on her,  
As he too, had been awed."

*Lady Freberg.* "Thou foolish stripling !  
She has bewitched thee. Is she large in stature?"

*Page.* "So stately and so graceful in her form ;  
I thought at first her stature was gigantic,  
But on a near approach I found, in truth,  
She scarcely did surpass the middle size."

*Lady Freberg.* "What is her garb?"

*Page.* "I cannot well describe the fashion of it,—  
She is not decked in any gallant trim ;  
But seems to me clad in the usual weeds  
Of high habitual state."

*Count Freberg.* (starting up,)  
"Tis Jane De Montfort."

My grandmother was born of Catholic parents, and reare  
under Catholic influence ; and it was a wish of hers that sh



could not disguise, that I should embrace the faith she revered—*loved*, I might have said ; but for the deadness to its tender impulses of which she constantly accused herself.

“ I sometimes wish,” I heard her say one day to Bishop Clare, “ that I had not been trained to piety, so that I might experience the joy of a newly received religion. The freshness of a yet inexperienced sensation like this, is what I need to rouse, to revivify me.”

“ There is a rekindling of such holy light in many earnest natures,” he rejoined, “ where habit has staled enthusiasm—for to this error of our very organization, all men are subject—more pure, more beautiful, than the pristine flame itself. This order of things is usually won by prayer and humiliation, for the doors and windows of the soul must be set wide open by such agents, before the breath of heaven can enter, to fan the smoldering embers of faith into renewed glory. But occasionally God condescends to manifest his power, through miracles, and the dying sinner, by no agency of his own, is saved and brought to a perfect understanding with his Creator.”

“ Father, must I wait for this ?”

There was a dry agony in the tones in which she asked this question.

By no means, my daughter. Seek, through the intervention of Saints, and above all, through the Virgin, the friend of all desolate women, the aid you desire. In old times these never failed you, why should they now ?”

“ I know not,” she made answer ; “ I only feel that they *do* fail me in my utmost extremity, in the apathy of my broken hopes, my advancing age.”

“ Camilla, you surprise me. To what can you attribute such inconsistency on the part of agents so divine, so infallible ?”

I did not hear her answer, it was made in suppressed tones ; but the surprised rejoinder rang out clearly and sternly.

"No, no ; you are wrong, utterly in error ! Discard the thought as unworthy of your own nature, and above all of Him, the Great, the immaculate Father ! Oh, my daughter ! my heart bleeds sorely for you !" He groaned aloud.

This conversation took place in my grandmother's chamber, and was, I felt, not intended for my ear ; but I had taken my seat, fatigued from some momentary exertion, on the broad step that led down from the open window to the lawn, and sat enjoying the fresh, balmy beauty of that April morning, attracted before I knew it, to listen, by the familiar voices, and the unusual words they uttered.

I rose now, and went into the room to disclose my presence ; but both speakers had disappeared, and, though I sought them through the house, it was not until dinner was served, and the summons of Fabius had drawn the remaining members of the family together in the dining-room, that Bishop Clare and my grandmother were again visible.

This absence formed food for conjecture in my mind. "They have been at the confessional," I thought ; "and that mysterious chamber is after all, oratory as well as dressing-room. I wonder how many images of saints and holy Madonnas are assembled there ! No ; this religion and its symbols would never suit me : dolls and images are well enough in their way, but how can they help us to serve God ? Does he care for all this ceremony ?" And I thought of the simple prayer of the old kirk, delivered standing, and revered more than ever the absence of form and the direct character of the faith of that grandmother who had never forbidden me to love her !

Temperament has, after all, more to do with religion than theologians are willing to acknowledge, and there certainly was in my very veins some principle antagonistic in its nature to Catholicism. I was made, I think, of those elements from which new churches, new forms of government have sprung. It was natural to me to investigate motives, and demand reasons for action ; and if I was a poor logician, I was at all events, no sophist, no self-deluder ;—what I believed was a part of my own being.

I have heard people talk of *choosing* a religion, as they would select a garment, and marvelled at the fallacy ! Oh, who can choose a conviction ; or who would not, if this were possible, believe in the comforting doctrines of the universalist or the epicurean ?

No ! religion is made of sterner stuff !. We cannot banish or deny the presence of evil ; it is here—we can only contend against it, with what limited power we have, and what divine assistance we receive. We cannot shut out the bitter belief in the vast inequality of human lots, prate as philosophers may of compensation on earth ; nor fail to perceive the absence of all justice in the *visible* dispensations of Providence. There would no virtuous man go down in the fiery sea of sorrow and adversity ; else would no icy-hearted villain prosper ! That these things are, none can deny—that noble lives are failures, that base ones are crowned with success, let Kossuth—let Louis Napoleon testify, for want of fitter examples, known to all men ! But we need not stop with public characters like these. In every sphere of life there are innumerable instances of this kind, and when we try to persuade ourselves that there is no truth in the dark doctrines of fate and election, let us reflect on these manifest inconsistencies, before our daily eyes.

Yet who wants to believe in these doctrines—who would incline to it if it were possible to waive them away by any process of human reasoning or self-deception ! And why should any belief, after all, however gloomy and oppressive in its tendency, make us, for one moment, falter in our faith in, and perfect love for God ?

For the future is in his hand of which we know nothing now, and the instinct is in all hearts, to trust in its mighty developments, its compensations, its unerring fidelity to, and correspondence with the past, so that they may be said to represent the two scales of a balance—one before us, with its heavy and uncomprehended measure of good or ill—the other with its unseen freight far in eternity.

Yet happy those who, closing their eyes on its complicated inconsistency, and seeing its sublime comfort, and loving charity alone, bow down and worship at the foot of the Catholic cross ! Happy those who deem that sin can be forgiven by proxy, and the gates of heaven entered by death-bed repentance ! These are the beings whom the rapture of heaven possesses even on earth, and who bear most often, lightly the burden of sin and sorrow so crushing to the sterner thinkers. Nature had never intended me to be one of these.

So the teachings of Bishop Clare entered not deep into my spirit, and I still continued to repeat the simple prayers, and to read the daily chapter in the Bible, as my grandmother De Courcy had taught me to do, and to believe that if I did the very best in my power, God would take care of the rest; for my fate was in his hands *only* who made the sea and the earth. I had nothing to do with my own life, or with the time of death, then wherefore great concern for the one, or fear for the other ?

God had given me a room, grandmother De Courcy said, in his great palace of the world, and I must sweep it and set it in constant order; but outside of that he would not permit me to go, either in life or death, unless he wanted my services beyond its limits. Then he would let me know in his own way! And with this quaint and primitive allegory I was satisfied.

There were no undue efforts made to change my habits of thought or worship, by those who believed so differently, or to confirm the convictions which had struck such deep root into my childish mind, by him who held the same tenets. These things were left to my own reason, my own inclination, with the delicacy inherent in high-bred people, so thoroughly at war with fanaticism that it shrinks from the responsibility of proselytism.

Strangely enough, Jasper, who might, from the sympathy natural between the young, have exerted a greater amount of influence over my religious views than any other member of the household, was himself disinclined to Catholicism, in spite of his love for his mother and reverence for Bishop Clare, and the instructions he had received from both. He inclined openly to the faith of Dr. Quintil, nor did this Calvinistic predilection of his seem to have caused him one reproach on the part of my grandmother. It was a subject, however, on which he rarely touched, as was certainly, under the circumstances, most wise and even delicate.

## CHAPTER VII.

I HAD hoped that when Bishop Clare's departure had left us leisure to be alone together again, my grandmother would refer to our former conversation, and recall the request she had made me. I had determined to be magnanimous, and forgive the injury she had done my feelings by putting aside my affection, when the time of explanation arrived. I waited vainly—the concessions I expected were never made; and although her manner, her constant kindness, left me nothing to complain of, I was, I confess, disappointed and even disheartened. It was my nature to love passionately, exclusively. Jasper was dear to me; Dr. Quintil possessed my confidence and respect, and even affection; but for my grandmother I had reserved the full cup of my devotion, linked with the sentiment of filial love, more potent than any other in my peculiar organization, and which was now wholly wasted and, as it seemed to me, unrecognized.

Yet I could not help feeling that in spite of all her efforts to smooth over affection with the gloss of duty, there *did* exist for me some stronger sentiment than she exhibited beneath the calm cheerful equipoise of her daily manner. I read it in her eyes, in the tones of her voice when she least suspected them of betraying her, and in that quiet vigilance with regard to all I did or said, that to the close observer is such an unerring indication of deep interest.

I had gone into the drawing-room with Bianca a few days after the termination of Bishop Clare's visit, to assist that notable person

in replacing the holland coverings of the elaborately embroidered chairs and sofas, and the protecting gauzes over the picture-frames, removed in honor of our guest, when the conversation I am about to relate occurred between us. It is hardly worth recording here, except as far as it gives a clue to later revelations, and gave at the time an impetus to my imagination, difficult to check even when reason and duty nerved me to the effort.

"You say, my grandmother embroidered all of these chairs, Bianca! How long was she about it, I wonder. What a time it must have taken her to cover the whole canvas with worsted work in this elaborate way."

"They were on hand, Miss Lilian, the best part of nine years, and I heard Dr. Quintillian say that the French Gobelines could produce nothing finer."

I laughed—I knew what she was aiming at—I had read of the Gobelin tapestry.

"You needn't laugh, Miss Lilian, in that scornful way, if you are book-learned, nor think yourself above such valuable work as this! It is something to be proud of, to be able to cover a whole set of furniture just with the work of one soft pair of hands. I wish you were just one half as industrious as your grandmother."

"Oh, Bianca, times are changed. Women write books and paint pictures now, instead of wearing out their eyes and patience on such tedious embroidery; and the day will come, I believe, when they will keep wooden seamstresses (automatons they call them, Bianca; an old man has taught one lately to play chess and blow the trumpet even), to sew up all their seams, while they amuse themselves, and read new books, and plant flowers, and write poetry."

"La, Miss Lilian ! your talk seems wild to me sometimes, and when I hear you predicting such strange things, do you know, child"—and she looked hard at me while she paused in her occupation—"you remind me (the land forgive me for even thinking of such a likeness, but it is the solemn truth) of Mr. Erastus, your grandfather."

"And why should I *not* remind you of him, Bianca, and why *should* you be afraid to say so ? Does not his blood flow in my veins ? Am I not his lineal descendant ? After all, what do these evasions, this determined silence, mean ? Speak to me ; it is my right, and I *will* know. What was his story ? Tell me of his life, of his death ? How did he die, Bianca ?" And I drew near to her, and laying my hand on her arm, looked steadfastly into her eyes. "Say, did he take his own life, as I have half-suspected, or was he *murdered*," and I prolonged the word with its vague horror, dropping my voice to a dreary whisper.

"Neither, Miss Lilian, dear," she replied, greatly agitated. "For pity's sake do not ask me anything more. Mrs. Bouverie would never forgive me if she knew that I had ever mentioned his name to you."

I knew that I had to do with a weak woman, in whose very timidity of organization lay her only strength ; for to *her*, discretion came through fear, the most powerful sentiment of which she was capable, probably, next to an unquestioning fidelity of habit.

"Bianca, there is one thing I *must* know ; you told me to-day, when I admired this beautiful new carpet, that it had been recently laid on the floor, and that the room had been closed for years until I came, when the *stained* carpet was removed to make way for this. You shuddered when you spoke of those stains, and the ineffaceable nature of them. Bianca ! were they caused



by his blood? Did he meet his death in this room? Speak to me; I tell you, this much I *must* know."

"No, no, Miss Lilian dear, no drop of his blood was ever spilled in this house that I know of, but I cannot, *cannot* tell you another word. I must not, I *dare* not, Miss Lilian;" and she sat down pale and terrified, as if overcome by the very thought of what she might be tempted to reveal.

I pitied her weakness, yet respected her scruples, and forbore from further questioning, although the excitement under which I was laboring flushed my cheek, and disqualified me for a time from rendering her further assistance.

At last I rose up, seeing that she was preparing with some hesitation to ascend the slight step-ladder she had brought with her, in order to cover the picture she had placed it before; and feeling that my firmer, more active foot could better poise my frame on the rather unsteady height of that somewhat hazardous contrivance for the old and feeble, I took from her hand the curtain of barred muslin, and ran lightly up the steps. She was evidently relieved by this volunteer enterprise of mine, and stood with her hand on the cross-bar that sustained the ladder, while she praised my activity and forethought, and paying little attention to her words, I contemplated at my leisure the peculiar face before me, which, hanging in a deep recess, had until now almost escaped my attention.

It was that of a powerful old man, furrowed, dark, ugly, malicious—with its small, black, rat-like eyes, and sneering lip, and shapeless nose, and bold, prominent forehead, surmounted by its crop of short, bristling grey hair, that grew in a harsh, unwavering line, in exact correspondence with the straight, shaggy brows beneath—beetle brows, I think they call them. The whole

aspect was that of a mean tyrant—Louis XI. might have looked just so.

I knew at once that the evil countenance of old Ursa, or Usher, Bouverie—for such was his real name—scowled full upon me.

“Oh ! Bianca, what a horrible old man he must have been. Let me get down !” I exclaimed, as I put the last pin in the covering ; “I am afraid of him, even on canvas—how, *how* in the world, did my grandmother ever manage to be fond of him ?”

“She never was, that I know of,” said Bianca, gravely ; “no one ever was ; but he almost worshipped her, partly because she looked like his wife—her mother’s aunt—as he fancied, and partly because she saved his life, when a little girl only ten years old, by knocking aside the hand that held a pistol to his breast, with her slight battledore. To be sure, Pat McCormick was drunk when he attacked the master, and weak, or the child could never have so disarmed him ; but, any way, the courage she showed, and the true feeling, made their way to the rough old man’s heart—for it seems he had one, after all—and he loved her, and left her all he had to leave, for his English estate was entailed on Mister Erasmus ; at least, that is the only way I can account for his affection.”

“Was it the cook’s son or husband who attempted this outrage, Bianca !”

“Oh ! her husband ; the overseer then, but he never showed his face here again after that, and died soon afterward in an almshouse ; and his son, Michael, took to the same bad ways, and went to sea, and married, maybe—who knows?—and brought back that simpleton to pester our lives out, just before his death—a part of the Bouverie luck, you know, Miss Lilian, is Pat McCormick.”

I had before admired the beautiful heads of my grandmother and Jasper, painted in clouds, and still recognizable, although youth had belonged to one, and infancy to the other, when they were executed ; and the noble half-length portrait of Dr. Luther Quintillian, with his Saxon face, and clear blue eyes—the elder brother of our Dr. Paul—which occupied the recess opposite to that containing Ursa, or Usher, Bouverie's picture. But there was one large canvas in the room, hanging over the fire-place, which fronted the door of entrance from the hall, on which I had never looked. The heavy, black cloth curtain that hung closely over it, revealed only the corners of the elaborately carved and gilded frame that surrounded it, and bade defiance to all but the most overt act of curiosity ; and this, the mood I was then in urged me to attempt.

I had an instinctive knowledge that this canvas contained the likeness of my grandfather, and had felt thrilled and impressed by its presence, even veiled as it was by the sweeping, pall-like curtain above it. But when I lifted the light step-ladder, and, placing it before the chimney, prepared to ascend it, in order to put aside the interposing veil, Bianca seized and held me with all her strength.

"Child, child," she said, "you do not know what you *would* be at ! No hand has touched that curtain since *that night*—no hand shall prosper that ever touches it again."

"Bianca," I said, standing perfectly passive in her grasp, "I mean to see that picture as surely as my life is spared to me. If you prevent me now, I will come back another time, even at the risk of discovery."

There was something in my manner, perhaps, or in the low, determined accents of my voice, that impressed her with my sin-

cerity ; her grasp gradually relaxed, and she turned away sorrowfully.

"Do as you will, Miss Lilian, for you are a hard and headstrong child, and not to be led by reason, or persuasion either ; but I wash my hands of it all, and maybe I shall tell your grandmother or Dr. Quintil."

"I do not care whom you tell, Bianca, or what any one says, though it pains me to be scolded. In the frame of mind I am in to-day, I would see that picture even were my grandmother De Courcy to rise in spirit, and forbid me to look upon it. There—you have my determination !"

"Oh, Miss Lilian, dear, I pity you, to be so persevering and so perverse ! No good will ever come to you unless you drive out this demon of self-will that possesses you. I will speak to Bishop Clare."

By this time I had ascended the ladder, and thrown back the curtain, and now came hastily down, that I might stand on the floor, and survey the painting to the best advantage, denying myself even the privilege of a glance toward it while I was unveiling it, lest the after effect should be destroyed.

I clasped my hands, and stood thrilled before the superb majesty of the presence which I had thus evoked from thick darkness. I saw a man, dressed in furs, dark, distinguished, elegant in appearance, standing with his arm thrown over the jet-black neck of a horse, the head and fore-shoulder of which appeared only on the canvas.

I had not time to study the picture as I could have wished to do, before the curtain, insecurely fastened back by my hasty hand, settled again above it, in heavy, dropping folds, as gradually as though arranged by unseen fingers, and the vision was shut away from my longing, straining eyes.

"See, Miss Lilian!" said Bianca, "you have offended your grandfather's very spirit, and the veil falls between you forever."

"Yes, forever!" I said, with a sudden change of mood; "I will never raise it again, I trust; I hope, at least, I never will. I have done wrong to look on anything my grandmother's house contains, without her approbation. But do not tell her, Bianca. It would do no good. It is well, perhaps, after all, that *I*, his *child*, should have seen his face at last," I murmured. "I must have looked *once*, or died!"

"We will go out, now, Miss Lilian, dear," she said, seeing that I still stood wrapped in dreams before the mantel, with its sable hangings above bringing out into such strong relief the whiteness and purity of the sculptured marble of which it was composed, and the Caryatides that upheld it on their hands; "we will go out, now; the covers are all replaced, and I must take the key of the drawing-room to your grandmother, until Bishop Clare comes again."

"First tell me, Bianca, how long has that black cloth curtain hung over that portrait?"

"Ever since the news came of the master's death in Russia, nearly twelve years, I think, next month, Miss Lilian."

"He died in Russia, then," I said, catching at the words she had carelessly dropped. "In battle, perhaps?—by violence, I know. Tell me, Bianca, I beseech you, tell me," and I clasped her hands persuasively in mine, "how my grandfather *died*? I have a right to know."

She shook her head: "You will know all some day," she said, "and then you will wish yourself back again where you are this morning. Such knowledge will burden you, Miss Lilian, burden all the rest of your life. But come along, it grows late, and I

have not made the custard for dinner yet ; besides, I heard the door of your grandmother's room open just now, and she will be wanting you."

It was her habit to close her chamber door for a few hours each day, whether in the afternoon or evening ; but to-day my absence with Bianca had determined the time of her seclusion. It seemed to me to belong to the dignity and peculiarity of her character, that she should thus retire into self-communing for a portion of each day, and I have elsewhere said that I had felt strengthened and uplifted by the self-reliance this very exile had impressed on me.

I found her to-day, preparing to walk to the remote vegetable gardens of her domain. The comfort of the household depended greatly, through the summer, on the successful planting of the spring garden, and although Smith was an efficient gardener, she preferred superintending the quantity and quality of the seed he planted, part of the result of which he disposed of by contract with his employer, for his own benefit.

I could not help saying, as we returned from our walk, "Grandmother, I do not like Smith's face, nor that of his wife either. They look mean and wicked, both."

"They are drunkards, I am afraid," she replied ; "but they do my work well so far, and I esteem permanence as a great good with regard to servants. They will never leave me, I think."

"And I do not like their ways," I added ; "they are so watchful, grandmother, and though they never look one in the face, they see everything with their underhand glances."

"It is a habit of vulgar people, Lilian, to look in this furtive way. A clear and steady gaze is an evidence of good breeding and native nobility of character. We cannot expect much of the

former from people like the Smiths, and as to the latter, I think with you, they do not *happen* to possess it. I have heard an observant man say, that in travelling in Europe he avoided as much as possible, all persons who wore spectacles, as he found they were the usual disguise of sharpers. The eye tells the truth in spite of training ; but the other features may be commanded and disciplined to deceive."

"I noticed to-day when Smith laughed so loud and long at something I was saying to his wife, that his eyes never changed in their expression ; but were as cold and hard as if his lips were not laughing. That is a bad sign, I think."

"What an observer and physiognomist you are, Lilian," she said, laughing. "Perhaps, some day, you may put all these matters in a book and surprise us, as Miss Burney did her father and family, by becoming an authoress !"

"Oh, no, grandmother ; I am sure there is nothing to make a book about as Bouverie, so quiet and uniform as everything is about us. It would be hard for me to imagine myself an enchanted princess and Jasper a prince deprived of his throne ; or you a banished queen ; or Dr. Quintil a bloodthirsty conspirator, hiding away from justice ; or Pat McCormick an evil genius ; or"—

"Lilian, it is not of materials like these modern books are made. You run on wildly, your ideas are so peculiar." She stopped—she gasped.

I looked at her amazed by the hardness and dryness of her voice, a moment since, so mellow, so affectionate ; and saw that the rich color that made the chief characteristic of her still remarkable beauty, had died from her cheek, and that her features were locked and sharpened, as if with agony.

"Lilian," she said, a moment later ; "let me lean on you, I am indisposed ; my heart beats wildly. Do not speak to me—it will pass—I am often thus." And in silence and sadness of spirit, and unavailing conjectures on my part, the walk was finished.

But when I entered the dining-room a few minutes after our return, every trace of suffering had passed from my grandmother's features, and she wore again her look of almost youthful animation. Nor would a superficial observer beholding her at the head of her table dispensing hospitality with such high-bred grace, and wearing her own rich, dark hair in profuse and careless abundance, have believed that youth had left her long ; and that middle age itself was fast passing away with the near approach of half a century.

I had almost forgotten, however, that one seal of time had been set indelibly on her stately head. A small grey plume seemed to have been laid flat among her dark tresses so as to cross her coiffure horizontally, and was perfectly defined, and separated from the neighboring locks ; otherwise, as I have said, dark and glossy.

This silver tress might have been considered symbolical of that deep-seated sadness and reserve that threaded her otherwise social and cordial temperament. For underlying all her determined cheerfulness, and her dutiful occupation of time and energy, there was undeniably something dead and despairing ; a stagnation of life and feeling at their very sources, that like water concealed by pond lilies, sent forth its depressing miasma beyond all the bloom and beauty that covered it.



## CHAPTER VIII.

It struck me as a peculiarity not consistent with her usual care and economy, that, although my grandmother's garb was simple and uniform—consisting, as it invariably did, of black silk, or some other material of the same sombre hue, relieved only by the handkerchief and collar of fine white muslin or lace she always wore, with its jet clasp at collar and throat—rich dresses, of many colors and fashions, were disposed—carelessly enough, I thought—in her wardrobe.

At first I supposed she might be intending to sit for her picture, as my grandmother De Courcy had done on one occasion ; and I remembered how, long before the painter arrived, her maid laid out, one by one, all those splendid dresses she had long ceased to wear, to tempt her to array herself as became her rank. But she chose the worn black velvet gown, after all, with the close lace cap, that became her so well, and which I knew as a part of herself ; and, so dressed, submitted herself to the artist's hands to be painted for my sake. The picture, she had bequeathed to me, hung at my bed-head, and was to me a guarding presence as potent as Saint or Virgin could have been to a Catholic worshipper, and far more dear, for I have elsewhere intimated that filial duty was the peculiar channel in which my affections tended most fully and perfectly.

"Grandmother," I said, one day, "I saw a beautiful black lace dress, with gold flowers embroidered over it, lying on your bed *yesterday*, spread out as if you meant to wear it to a gay party.

If you will give it to me, I will put it by carefully, and sew tissue-paper over the flowers, and save it to shine in, when I am a young lady."

"No, Lilian, not that! God forbid that you should ever wear that fated dress—that blood-stained garb, which must lie with me in the grave! Years have passed since I wore it, or looked upon it before. Years may pass before I wear it again. It will be a strange sight, Lilian, to see clay wrapped in such a shroud; but to this use alone can that magnificent dress ever be consigned again."

"You have many fine dresses, grandmother; had we not better pack them away? Perhaps you may need them again some day, or perhaps"—I smiled, and hesitated.

"Or perhaps they may be shaped to suit my Lilian's slender form. Was that your thought, my prudent little Scot?"

"I don't know how else I shall ever have fine dresses," I answered; "for I know that I shall be quite poor, and it will take all my money to buy images, and stuffed birds, and poems, and shells—Indian shells, grandmother—with their splendid hues, more lovely even than flowers."

"Flowers have life, Lilian; shells are but dead things at best—poor outcasts of vitality! I never have cared much for them. But, after all, why buy such things at all? You speak of them as if they were necessary to you; whereas they are at best the merest whims of luxury. Good clothing, you know, is a requisition of society that every lady must comply with—you among the rest."

"Then I will dress in calico, and give up society; for I would so much rather indulge my tastes, than dress to please other people. Indeed, grandmother," I added, with a half scornful air, "I believe I have very little native turn for the world."

She laughed. "What do you know of the world, Lilian, that you should abjure it so promptly? Who made you such a philosopher? How will all those strange thoughts that puzzle your own brain as well as mine, find vent, unless you go out and converse freely with your fellow beings?"

"In poetry, grandmother," I said so gravely, that the laugh was checked upon her lips, and faded from her eyes; and now she looked upon my face with mournful tenderness, as she put back my hair from my compact, yet not lofty, forehead, and, shaking her head, said slowly:

"Child, child, have we reduced you to this extremity?"

"Not yet," I said; "not yet. I am only practising to be a poet; the time has not come, but it will—it must, grandmother; I feel it here."

And I laid my hand on my heart solemnly.

"Ah! heart-poetry, Lilian, not that of the brain—a caprice, a fancy, child—put it away. Don't you know poetical women are never happy?"

"Are *you* poetical, grandmother?" I asked, unconscious of the sting my words conveyed.

"No, Lilian, no! That only was wanting to complete the rest. No tyrant of the intellect has ever tortured my thoughts until they fled to the crowd for sympathy. What I have had to bear I have made no moan over."

"I will write poems for money and for fame, grandmother—not for sympathy; and I will buy those splendid dresses for myself, perhaps, that you refuse to give me, with my own toil. Since you will not be my godmother, and touch me with your wand, and make me a princess, I will turn fairy, myself," I said, *laughing*.

"What a type you have chosen, Lilian! Remember how, having attained her wish, her own disobedience and want of faith converted Cinderella into a mass of rags again; and how darkly she sat down amid the ashes of her hopes, and the cinders of her remorse."

"Ay, but grandmother, she rose out of these again to be great and happy."

"True, true, child; but the story fails there. All women have not been so rewarded for long-suffering and meek patience."

"You, for instance, grandmother," I said impulsively—impertinently, perhaps.

"I, child!" She spoke with a cold surprise. "Alas, I have never been patient—never experienced the true sense of that most godlike quality. I am one of those impotent beings who have chafed bitterly against the ills of life, and submitted only when submission ceased to be a virtue, since it became a necessity. But, Lilian, you must not be so personal."

"I scarcely understand you. What is it to be personal, grandmother?"

"Perhaps you will understand the idea better when I speak in metaphor: you a poet—a practising poet—not yet quite perfect!"

"Oh, grandmother, I will never tell you anything again, if you taunt me afterward."

"I was only 'personal,' Lilian; that is, I only took up the bodkin with which vulgarity loves to stab good breeding, and showed you how to use it. But *come* with me," she said, amused at my clouded, half-puzzled countenance, "and I will show you a lace dress that will better become your fair young face than that ominous Cinderella robe of mine you coveted—that 'Auto da fé' garment."

And she opened for the first time before my gaze the cedar chest lined with white satin, which had passed into her keeping when Dr. Quintil brought me to Bouverie ; and which contained the wedding trousseau of her child. From that hour the key was mine, and I revelled in the possession of its varied treasures.

Not only had my mother's wardrobe been preserved for me by my thoughtful grandmother De Courcy, but almost every token she could gather of her brief and innocent life. My mother's and my father's miniatures—the first, slight, dark, spiritual—the last, fair, frank, joyous—their sacred correspondence, full of aspirations never to be realized, and hopes to be crowned but for a season ; locks of their hair, blended in vivid contrast ; faded flowers, fervent mementoes, were there, too early consecrated by the hand of death to the adamant altar of eternity ; pearls for the breast, and brow, and arm, that might have passed unquestioned by Undine herself for size and water, and which had been *her* father's wedding gift to my mother ; and a girdle of aqua marine and a cross of diamonds, more than usually magnificent, which had been those of *mine*.

There, too, were the rosary, and the ritual, and the mass-book, that indicated my mother's faith, strangely preserved in that Puritanic land, and revered for her sake, though no heritage of mine, as to the belief they inculcated ; and a hundred rare and delicate legacies of taste and affection, in the shape of unfinished broidery, and half-tinted drawings, and exquisite designs for needlework, mutely suggesting to her child the value she had placed on every moment of her short and happy life.

Short and happy—are not those words indissoluble ? Is happiness—worthy to be called such—ever lengthened beyond a brief and uncertain term ? Let no man count himself wholly un-

fortunate who can look back either from his sleepless bed of luxury, or prison-couch of penury, and say, "*I once was happy!*"

Brother, there are some of thy fellow beings who have no privilege to utter words like these—above whom, through life, an eternal cloud has brooded unpierced by any sunshine, and to whom the whole memory of the past is pain. Let not such even despair! The grave is near, the gateway to a new existence, where mercy and justice reign eternally, and sunshine is equally dispensed for all who merit its reviving rays. Faith, hope, and patience! The mystic three, before whose magic touch sorrow and sin fade into oblivion, and earthly troubles drop to dust, stand ready to comfort *him*, denied by experience and memory!



## BOOK SECOND.

"Thou busy priest,"

BARRY CORNWALL.

"Dost thou deem  
It such an easy task, from the fond heart  
To pluck affection out?"

SOUTHEY.

"Can this be true? methought I was acquainted  
With all the dusky corners of this house!"

COLERIDGE.

"He has, I know not what  
Of greatness in his looks, and of high fate  
That almost awes me."

DRYDEN.





## BOOK SECOND.

### CHAPTER I.

WHEN Bishop Clare came back to Bouverie, after long absence, the summer in all her languid beauty reigned over the land, and exerted a depressing influence over the health and spirits of those who required all the energy they could command at any season, to support the stagnant routine of their lives.

My grandmother, more than any other member of the household, seemed to droop and fail, under the dry glare of August. She had lost appetite, even for fruits, usually her favorite food—and her habitual color died from her cheek, leaving it clear yet fallow. Jasper, too, was pale and listless, and would lie dreaming under the trees for hours, with a neglected book, instead of exerting himself with his pencil or pen, as he had been in the habit of doing, or galloping through the woods and meadows, or to Croften for letters and papers, on his beautiful grey mare—Violet Fane.

Dr. Quintil and I bore up better under the steady breathless heat—yet his anxiety about those he loved would not suffer him to rest, and day after day he was devising new remedies for debility and languor, new provocatives for the failing appetite, of those he watched with such unwearying solicitude. As for me, I confess, that for the first time in my life, I suffered from ennui—a strange enemy to beset a girl of my age, full of life, and health, and vigor, and with occupation enough to beguile time,

very effectually—if this, indeed, were all that is needed for such a purpose.

Two years had passed since we last saw Bishop Clare—two years which he had spent abroad, partly for the benefit of his church, and partly in the hope of restoring his own declining health. He returned invigorated and satisfied with the success of his mission, and with all his olden interest and affection for the inmates of Bouverie unchanged ; pained, indeed, to see the evidences of ill-health in my grandmother's appearance, and never weary of exclaiming at my rapid growth and wonderful physical and mental improvement.

Those years had indeed done more for my development than any other five of my life have effected. They had brought to me my full stature, and opened unsuspected sources of intellect and feeling ; yet with them had come new suspicions, painful glimmerings of truths, cautiously and I could but think injudiciously, concealed from me. Among other matters a light had dawned across my brain—wakened how and when I could scarcely tell—that had changed Jasper's attitude toward me, and thrown constraint between us. He himself had aided but little to do this—no one had openly done it. I could recall but one overt advance to such a revelation on Jasper's part—it was when we were reading the "*Bride of Abydos*" together—alone in the library. He drew near to me on the sofa on which we were sitting, and encircling me with one arm in his half playful yet fraternal way, stopped me in my reading to draw his pencil beneath the line—"*Zuleika, I am not your brother.*" Then rose and went hurriedly out ; nor did he recur again to this imperfect explanation of a subject that embarrassed both.

Bianca's insinuations had long pointed to this ; my own instincts

had risen against the disproportioned tie between us ; but that a near one existed, I could not doubt, though not precisely *that*, I felt, which I had been heretofore suffered to suppose—our bond of kindred.

Yet I neither demanded, nor received the slightest satisfaction about the condition of things that had weighed so heavily upon me, from any one around me, and I leave to the reader the solution of the question why it would have been such joy to me to feel that a distant link of relationship alone united me to Jasper.

There is a wonderful sagacity in affection to discover the exact limit of its natural boundaries. Nature speaks to blood as to the waves of the ocean, and says in commands that are never mistaken, nor transcended, "So far, and no further shalt thou go."

An external voice only had said these things to me—no law of my soul spoke out against the affection I gave to Jasper—no cry of wrong-doing rose up to stifle my devotion.

It was in a state of things like this that Bishop Clare arrived at Bouverie, and never were his cheerfulness, and practical wisdom, and determined energy more needed than now among us.

He came from the outside world, bearing a valued freight—as a ship to a distant island. His simple yet shrewd and practical nature befitted him well to mingle with, and understand men and motives, and to deal with them. He had a power of delineation and even analysis that belongs to few, and which, wherever it may be found—commands interest and attention. His conversational powers were far beyond those of many men, his superiors in knowledge and profundity of thought, adapted as they were to the occasion by an infinite sweetness of manners and native good breeding.

He saw at a glance how heavy a cloud was brooding over our patient household, and he strove to dispel it by cheering accounts of matters beyond our province—by vivid descriptions of scenes he had recently moved among—by animated, yet always friendly controversy with Dr. Quintil, whose chief delight lay in argument—and by lively pictures of friends once familiar to my grandmother, and still remembered by her with placid affection, although shut away forever now from her narrow sphere.

The effort made in turn to entertain him suitably, and as became her own dignity, reacted favorably on my grandmother's condition. Additional delicacies were provided at meals—for one who cared little for more than a bone and crust, and a draught of water—and yet who recognized with pleasure the spirit of the exertions made to honor him.

We sat in the drawing-room, with its pleasant shadowed windows and handsome surroundings; we looked over folios of pictures, and talked of books, long neglected or laid aside, or examined some curious presents he had brought. The old enthusiasm for chess was revived, which Bishop Clare declared to be "the only perfect *human* institution—both as to arrangement and conduct," and thus revealed, my grandmother declared, the Templar Spirit that abode in his heart in spite of modern innovations. For she contended that a taste for military tactics and chess always existed together—and that it was a mistaken notion to look upon it as a scholar's or clergyman's game! It was nothing but war in disguise!

"I wish you could live here always, Bishop Clare," I said to him one day, after listening with rapt attention to one of those lively narratives he told so well, at the subsidence of which my grandmother had left the room.

"The house is so different when you are here! We were all very silent and dull before you came; but now, all except Jasper seem to have revived!"

"And he, poor fellow, is in love!" I started, then laughed and colored at the quaint and sudden accusation; for I felt that his calm, blue eye perused my face. "How did you find it out, Father Clare? Did he confess it to you, and have you betrayed him?"

"My dear Lilian, I am an old man, but I see very quickly into an affair of this sort. I was in love too at his age, and like him, fell into the dumps, until those wiser than myself determined to send me away, and so and so—I got over it."

"But who is there for him to fall in love with? Does he visit any one? Has he acquaintances in Croften?" I asked with ill-suppressed emotion.

"Who knows, my dear, what a young man's fancy may lead him to? Perhaps it would be best for *you* not to inquire further. Jasper is twenty years old now, and it is time he should see the world. We are about to send him to Leyden to the university."

"To Leyden?" I trembled, I grew pale; but soon commanding myself, I said, "Why of all places in the world to Leyden—that horrid Dutch town? Why not to Yale, to Cambridge, father—to an English college even?"

"Leyden was his mother's birthplace, and a small heritage falls to him there when he completes his majority. To claim this he must go in person. We deem it best to send him a year sooner, that he may take advantage of the schools, and consult with a famous professor there, about his lameness, and see Prince Hohenloe\* in person, as a patient sent by *me*, and finally, have

\* The miraculous cures of Prince Hohenloe are matter of history.

an opportunity of recovering from this impossible love dream of his !”

“Impossible ! Why impossible, Bishop Clare ? Answer me as you have mercy for us *both*. Say, would Jasper’s love be sinful in the eyes of God ?”

I laid my clasped hands on his arm, and looked imploringly into his face.

“It seems so, Lilian, when all the circumstances are considered.”

“What circumstances ? I desire—I *demand* to know ! Loose insinuations have been thrown out—significant hints dropped—that distress, that *torture* me. You know in this house of mystery one can ask no questions. The people that come to us in dreams are not more unsatisfactory in their proceedings than those of Bouverie. You are of the world, though a minister, and have a human heart, and not a substitute of stone—a mere filterer for the life blood to flow through. Tell me the truth—*What is my true relationship to Jasper Bouverie ?*”

“Ask me no more, Lilian ; I cannot answer you now. Yet render to those about you, I beseech you, the justice at least to believe they do nothing in vain, nor without considering your best interest. For all our sakes—for his, and more especially for your own—suffer no confidence on this subject to escape from Jasper. He will repent it hereafter, if he betrays himself now, and shrink from you evermore as the cause of such self-betrayal ; and Lilian hear me. Do not seek to be alone with Jasper again. There is a ban of blood between you two !”

He paused—he turned away ; and as if in horror of his own words, covered his eyes with one hand and waved the other.

“I know—I know !” I said. “He is my uncle, or you call him

such; *that* is indeed a ban of blood! Oh I never thought of this before. I wish—I wish you had not spoken, Bishop Clare.”

“Had I not done so, he *would*—he *must* have spoken, and then infinite misery might have pursued you both. The discovery of this misplaced passion has seriously affected your grandmother’s health; she sees in you unusual growth of both mind and stature, indications of an early womanhood, that redoubles her solicitude in your behalf. Scarcely fifteen, you wear the presence and appearance of at least two additional years; and Jasper forgets that you are really but a child, and—and—his *relation*. On your good sense, and honorable forbearance, I place my hopes. Promise me that before he leaves this house you will receive no *love* passages from Jasper.”

“I promise you, Bishop Clare, but I think you wrong him; he could not forget our close—*close* kindred, so far as to breathe such words to me. Why, he is to me as a dear, only brother!”

“And such he shall remain if you retain your prudence and keep your word. But think of the sorrowful estrangement that rash avowals on his part must occasion; one of you would be obliged to leave Bouverie!”

“But now that I am warned, you will not send Jasper away?” I asked eagerly.

“Yes for the present, Lillian, he must go; and when I leave Bouverie I take him with me, and see him safely placed on ship-board before we part. But there will still be a week of interval before this time, and all depends on you.”

“I think you have shown great confidence in me, father, and although you have given me exquisite pain, I appreciate and will



not betray it. I promise to obey your directions," I said, with downcast head.

"Not a word, then, Lillian, to any one—not even to your grandmother—on this subject. You will see later the wisdom and the justice of my proceeding."

"But, when Jasper comes back, Bishop Clare, what then?" I faltered.

"He will come back *cured*!—you need anticipate no trouble on that score. Have I not told you that at his age my friends sent *me* to travel, to avoid just such a snare, and that it succeeded perfectly?"

"Oh, Bishop Clare, Jasper is not like you; he will never forget me." I gasped, I trembled.

"Lillian, have I misread you?" he said, grasping my arm, and shaking it slightly. "Are you so weak, so wrong-minded, as to encourage guilty hopes like these? Speak—if so, you, too, must go beyond the reach of danger. Back to Scotland!—back, as were best, in any case," he murmured, "to Taunton Tower!" And he frowned on me sternly, speaking vehemently.

"*I will* not go!" I said, looking up. "I will stay here, and obey you to the letter. Is not this enough?" I added, indignantly; "have you any right to probe my inmost soul? I am no slave of yours—no Catholic; you have wrung and wounded me sufficiently—let me pass!"

And bursting away from his detaining hand, I sought my chamber—to lie alone, with my burning face buried in the pillow, and indulge in passionate tears. "Jasper, Jasper," I murmured, "the priest may be all wrong, as I know such love as yours would be; but I feel that in heaven it can be no sin for you to claim me

as your kindred spirit, and I will walk through life alone for your sake, my Jasper. I am a child no longer—your love, real or fancied, has made a woman of me at once, strong to feel and to suffer ; and I do love you, oh, my Jasper ! more entirely, more intensely, than—than Hero loved Leander. (I could think of no stronger comparison.) But I will keep my word, and this shall save us *both* from the sorrow of such sin as spoken love would be.”

I sobbed myself to sleep ; and, when our late supper-hour arrived, Bianca had difficulty in arousing me. I rose hastily at her summons, as soon as it became distinct to my ear ; and, smoothing my disordered hair and garments, went into the dining-room, where Bishop Clare—the inveterate toper !—sat slowly sipping his fifth cup of weak black tea. Jasper had supped, and risen from the table, and now reclined on the sofa at some distance from it ; and Dr. Quintil was reading aloud the description of a fearful hurricane in the South—Mississippi, I believe—in the moon, it might as well have been, so little could I realize the nature of it in the mood of mind in which I was. To this narrative, both my grandmother and Bishop Clare lent rapt attention, interrupted only by expressions of interest or commiseration. But I was insensible as steel to the whole recital.

Once I ventured to look up, and saw that Jasper was watching me ; and, for the first time in my life, his gaze flooded my whole face with crimson. He rose, and left the room, conscious, perhaps, that his vigilance disconcerted me ; nor did he join us in the drawing-room that evening.

I moved about in a sort of wretched dream ; but found myself, after a time, sitting close to Bishop Clare, while my hand nestled in his. I could not bear any longer his cold, averted look. He

must be my chief comfort now—my counsellor, my confidant, if needs must be ! He who made the wound must cauterize it. I knew by his friendly grasp, that my injudicious haste was forgiven ; but no words were spoken between us on the subject, then or thereafter.

## CHAPTER II.

I AVOIDED Jasper, as I had promised to do. Half-sick, as I was, I took advantage of my slight feverishness to pass whole days on my bed alone in my little, cool, dark room, with its one jalousied window and white draperies, through which every breeze bore the spicy scent of the clinging pink honeysuckle without—that refuge where sunshine and watchful eyes never penetrated, to flout and annoy me.

And, lying there, I heard those light, quick, ghostly footsteps above my head, of which Bianca had warned me, and which I had before caught uncertainly and at rare intervals, but with little or no faith, from the first, in their supernatural character. I heard them distinctly now in the nervous crisis under which I was laboring, which sharpened every sense even to intensity ; and, again, a heavier, slower tread, and—could it be my fancy?—in that sultry, summer stillness, the low roaring of a furnace, or smothered fire, seemed at intervals to fill my ear, as the moaning of a shell may do when held close to the head.

I shuddered, and held my breath, as this novel sound first took possession of me ; and, at that moment, Dr. Quintil came in with some composing draught he had prepared for me.

"You are more nervous than before, Lillian," he said, feeling my wrist ; "your pulse is feeble and fast."

"Those noises upstairs," I whispered, clinging to his arm with uncontrollable terror, "quite unnerve me—I am frightened ? What can they mean ?"

He listened for a moment, as if to assure himself of the correctness of my impression, and then said—although I had heard no sound in the interval—with a shake of the head, and a faint smile :

“You do not let a few rats having complete possession of abandoned premises, or the hollow voice of the wind in disused chimneys, make a coward of you, I hope? You must bear a stouter heart, Lilian—this will never do !”

And such was the power of this man over me, in his simple, upright manliness, and native truth of character, that these few words did more to dispel my fears than whole tirades of argument, founded on sounder reasoning, would have done, from a less reliable source.

Yet he had asserted nothing, disproved nothing ; and, later, I remembered this—and was glad to be able to do so—as an evidence of his unvarying consistency and integrity.

One evening—the last of Bishop Clare’s stay—I rose after twilight had set in, and made my way through my grandmother’s room to the great open window ; and there, among the long, white, transparent curtains, swaying to and fro in the faint breeze of summer, I sat down, to inhale the pleasant breath just awakened by the night.

I would have gone elsewhere, but I felt that Jasper was seeking me ; and that here only I could be secure from his dear yet avoided presence.

I had promised Bishop Clare not to meet him alone, and I would keep that promise, even though it cost me much, and oppressed me with a suffocating sense of desolation. Yet I could not bear the constraint, and the light of the drawing-room ; nor *did I wish for food*. Air, freedom, solitude, darkness, were what

I wanted, and what I sought, as I crouched in the embrasure of the wide window that opened to the floor.

The night was one of peaceful beauty. A few stars were visible, and the narrow-crescent moon hung high in the heavens; yet the crimson remnant of sunset skirted the horizon, like the smile that lingers on dead lips we love—so sweet, so holy, that life never wore any expression half so lovely.

There are certain temperaments, not the loftiest, perhaps, that find great consolation, in the various influences of nature—even in seasons of adversity. Mine is of this class; and that evening I folded the quiet twilight to my heart, as a friend that would not betray me, nor desert me in my need, and stretching forth my hands to the calm unheeding sky, I murmured of my sorrow. I was startled from my reverie, if such that passionate mood might have been justly called, by the sudden opening and shutting of a door behind me. I turned to see the dimly defined forms of my grandmother and Bishop Clare emerge from the secret chamber.

They came together to the centre of the room, and communed there for a few moments in low tones. I heard only the words: "Again, that fatal passion! I hoped it was laid at rest—with other madness. Camilla, you must discourage this!"

"Father, I cannot! Think of the isolation of such a life, and be merciful in your judgment. What else remains—what other resources are left for one so lost, so lonely?"

I rose and fled away. It was not right—not honorable for me to hear another word. Once before I had overheard a conversation between these two, not intended for any ear, and

from the same hiding-place. This should not be again—and yet I could not bear to appear before them as one who had listened, even unintentionally, to any portion of their sacred confidence.

Obedying this *instinct*, almost of self-preservation—for is not self-respect the dearest part of self—I went out upon the lawn—and sought the deep-shadowed retreat I loved—inclosed by a clump of laurel trees—and threw myself at length on its rustic bench. I lay on my face—this buried in my hands—and moaned aloud.

Everything about me seemed mysterious and repulsive. I was bewildered—tempted—yet repelled! Wild thoughts were busy in my brain—conjectures thickened; half-formed suspicions gathered strength, and substance came from shadows.

But above all, the sorrow of my bereavement weighed on me most heavily, and with passionate tears I called upon *his* name—there in the calm and unpitiful night—who was more than life to me.

“Jasper—my Jasper—do not—do not leave me. I cannot live without you—dear—most dear!”——

I felt his soft touch on my hair. I would have known it in a thousand. I looked up—I sprang to my feet—I strove to evade him.

He clasped my hands in his—he drew me gently to his bosom, and folded me there in one long, mute embrace. It was but a moment and he was gone; but the letter he had written remained in my hand, to be read and read again—night after night, with ever new and ever tearful joy.

We parted next morning in the presence of the household—in

ender yet grave and decorous manner worthy of our *relation*. Bishop Clare was the last to say "Farewell" to me, and he kissed my cheek, he whispered in my ear : " You could help the meeting in the 'Laurel-bower.' I am witness that a behaved well on the occasion, and kept your word to *the* 'er.'" So speaking, he was gone.



## CHAPTER III.

JASPER's letter to me, was not one of those extravagant effusions that ordinarily come under the acceptation of love-letters, and yet it gave me a sweet assurance that brought back health to my frame, and happiness to my heart. I felt convinced from its tenor that his relationship to me could not be so near as I had imagined even. Sometimes I doubted altogether that any tie of blood bound me to her I called my grandmother, and I half conceived the idea that she had been merely the step-mother of my grandfather's daughter. Yet how could I reconcile this state of things to her own remark : "I have never seen your mother since she was one day old," made on the first evening of my advent to Bouverie ?

Alas, alas ! Did there rest on that mother the dark stain of illegitimacy, which by educating her in a foreign land her father had sought to conceal, and was the birth of this child a cause of this terrible sorrow that seemed to have risen up between husband and wife, and shadowed their hearth forevermore ? Or was my grandmother ?—But, no ! I could not question of *her*, so great, so true, so noble as she undeniably was ! Nor could there be a reasonable doubt of her close relationship to Jasper, as evidenced by her devotion to him, and tenderness such as she never bestowed upon me.

If alien there was, I was that alien ; and crushing as was the first thought that had presented itself to my mind. I fear now *that I fostered it*, rather than believe that Jasper was indeed

my uncle. No ! this could not be ; and that my opinion was not altogether without foundation, let his letter prove.

"Lilian," it said, "they are sending me away because I insist on making revelations to you on which our life-long happiness depends. Not content with exacting a promise from me, to defer these until after my return from Leyden, they have, I perceive it clearly, Lilian, poisoned the very sources of your affection for me by giving you the impression, that my reckless hand would lay low your peace, as dear to me as my own life, by sacrificing the sacred ties of blood. Do not believe this, Lilian. Rest as you have ever done, in the sweet confidence that I would do no violence to any feeling of your heart—nor to any covenant of society !

"Yet I cannot, my tender child, without forfeiting a solemn trust, make matters plainer to you now ; nor can I bear, without a perfect explanation of the nature I desire to make, to remain near you longer. I am convinced in my own mind that it would be better for all parties concerned to suffer this understanding to take place at once ; but, as I am refused this privilege, rather than rest in a false position another hour, I have consented to go away for a season, and it may be for the best.

"But in this at least I feel that I have been wronged ; when the reluctant promise to which I have referred was exacted from me, I was, I think, entitled to such confidence as would have spared you the burden they have laid on your young life. I should have preserved the pledge I made immaculate ; and to doubt me was to dishonor.

"I think we owe much of what we suffer now, to the amiable but ill-advised interference of Father Clare, whose jesuitical tendency has been plainly shown by the whole proceeding. These

confessors have strange views of human motives, because they believe what they hear in their confessional, and never hear the truth! We should not be so judged, were the common standard of truth and honor higher; but as it is, my Lilian, we must bear.

"I know my gentle girl will believe me incapable of cherishing any hope or aspiration connected with her, that I might not with propriety spread before the world; and that the time may come when this may be done without reproach or reserve, I pray to the Parent of all good.

"In the meantime write to me, dear beloved friend, freely and frequently, and send me your poems, just as they fell from your pen, that I may, though distant, trace the progress of those powers with which God has so richly gifted you.

"For my own part, I do not conceal from you that my hope of success in that peculiar walk of art to which I incline, gilds this exile from home, and alone makes the thought of absence endurable.

"You that have watched with such interest my crude efforts, and suggested to me, out of the storehouse of your ardent fancy, so many beautiful subjects for design, will, I well know, go hand in hand with me along the path I have traced, and rejoice in whatever distinction I may achieve.

"For believe me, beloved Lilian, no day shall pass in which I shall not be near to you in thought and in affection, however arduous my tasks may be; and the hope of pleasing you, and the thought of your beaming eye and smile, shall cheer and strengthen your devoted Jasper."

Was this a letter to be ashamed of—to be taunted about? *No.* Bishop Clare should read it—I resolved on it at once—

whenever he came again. I would make him ashamed of the part he had performed. He, an anointed priest of God, to play the spy and the eavesdropper! How my cheek burned as I thought of his covert sarcasm, when he averred that I had obeyed him "*to the letter!*" A play upon words, at such a time as that, was too unfeeling. Why had he not a family of his own to attend to, like other men? Why must he meddle forevermore in our affairs?

Long before he came again, all these bad feelings had melted into thin air. Troubles of my own had arisen, to humiliate, to torture me; and connected with these, had dawned over me some glimmering of the unseen motives that had prompted him to take so decided a part in affairs that seemed little or no concern of his, at the time of Jasper's departure.

It was early in December before he found himself at leisure to return to Bouverie; and in this interval some remarkable revelations had been made to me, partly by accident, partly through my own enterprise and headstrong determination to cut the Gordian knot of mystery at once. I was in sackcloth and ashes for all this when he came; yet I told him nothing of what had occurred, although I surmised that from another source he had obtained information of my proceedings. The autumn had been full of incident to him; the epidemic prophesied by Dr. Quintil had, during that season, ravaged a portion of his diocese, and had indeed approached near to our own doors; and, as usual, Bishop Clare had breasted the fierce tide of suffering with all the skill and energy he could command.

Priest, doctor, soldier—all in one—he bore back to us the marks of the strife he had encountered, and was fain to rest for weeks, at Bouverie, before he went forth again to the renewed

discharge of his pastoral duties. The old man was sorely shaken; he was more bent and worn, my grandmother thought, than she had ever seen him, and her solicitude about him found vent when we were alone.

"Oh, Lilian, what if he *should* pass away before me! How could I live without the staff of my whole life—my comforter, my counsellor, my almost more than father? Cut off as I am from my fellow-beings, an exile from society, he seems the link, not only between my soul and heaven, but my life and the earth it clings to now!"

I reproached myself sorely then for my hard thoughts toward this good, this disinterested man—so self-forgetting, so truly devoted to the welfare of his fellow-creatures, as to neglect his own; and my hasty resolution to show him Jasper's letter was at an end, when I reflected that he might be wounded to the quick by the manner in which he was mentioned in its pages.

I had thought, at one time, that he deserved a blow like this—and from the very hand that dealt it. I looked upon matters differently now. I saw why they had hesitated to trust one so young, and so impetuous, with the perilous confidence that must have been reposed, had reasons been assigned for a new position between Jasper and myself; and I bowed before the still uncomprehended fiat.

But, in recording these convictions, I am anticipating the events that gave rise to them, and deferring an acknowledgment of error that it costs me dear to make, even at this hour. Let me go back to the middle of October. It was then that the suspicions that had long haunted me, though vague and unformed, received confirmation in the startling manner I am about to relate.

*During a week of stormy weather, I had taken refuge during*

my leisure hours in the basement conservatory, with my ball, and battledoor, and skipping-rope, for the sake of the unimpeded room for exercise which it afforded. The plants it contained—recently brought in for shelter—were ranged in long rows on that side of the apartment on which the windows were pierced ; and between these and the blank partition opposite, lay an open pass-way, of nearly twenty feet in breadth, and at least thirty in length—for the room embraced the space occupied by the drawing-room, and a portion of the lateral hall above it.

Tired of skipping up and down the uneven pavement, I had just commenced to throw my ball against the partition, when I heard a familiar voice exclaim :

“ Oh, what a ‘ lively bouncer ’ she is ! Miss Lilian, let me come play ball with you, please, ma-am ! ”

I turned, with a mixture of disgust and indignation, to chide the intruder ; but his poor, pleading face—pathetic enough, at all times, in its unmitigated foolishness—disarmed me, and I merely said :

“ Don’t you know, Pat, that stable boys never play ball with young ladies ? Go away, directly, or I shall have to call the dame.”

He stood a moment, slightly confounded by this threat, which he knew would, if put into execution, bring about certain unpleasant consequences ; but, soon recovering himself, he thrust out his hand, with its long, dangling fingers, and said, in a wheedling way, inexpressibly ridiculous and repulsive at once, to me :

“ Miss Lilian, dear, give me your ball—your pretty red ball, that looks like mammy’s Bible—I want it to keep the witches away, they pesters me so of nights ! ” looking fearfully around, with an expression worthy of Tam O’Shanter himself. Then

drawing closer to me, he added, in a loud whisper, holding one hand over his mouth, and stooping forward, as if there might be ear-witnesses about, while the other was still extended in true beggar fashion :

"If you'll give me your houncer, Miss Lilian, I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll show you my pretty old play-actor man upstairs, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the kettles, and all, where he cooks his victuals ; but don't tell mammy, or"—walling his eyes fearfully—"she'll pin my tongue to the biscuit-board again with her big darning-needle."

"Poor wretch ! did she ever treat you thus ? Why didn't you go at once and complain to Mrs. Bouverie ? What made you bear such barbarity ?" I asked, pausing in my amusement.

He did not answer my indignant interrogatories, nor even seem to heed them ; but continued to plead, still stretching forth the supplicating hand, by this time so drawn up as to resemble the claw of a bird of prey.

"You see, Miss Lilian, the witches tells me, that old Master Ursa Boobery"—so he invariably pronounced this aristocratic name—"buried money pots down in the woods, where the spotted snake watches ; and, if you will give me your Bible ball, I will roll it in the hollow till it stops right over the gold. And then I will 'vide with you, Miss Lilian—indeed I will !—half and half, for a bargain is a bargain, and a promise must never be broke—so Bishop Clare says."

"Be quiet, Pat, and go your ways. I am tired of your folly. There, poor fellow ! take the ball ; you have little enough to please you, heaven knows ! And listen, Pat !—if you ever follow me here again, I will tell Dr. Quintil and your mammy both, I promise you."

He turned away well pleased with the granted plaything, and, taking up my rope, I was preparing to jump again, when I felt my arms violently seized from behind ; and, before I could resist or cry out, I was thrust into an opening, never suspected before, against a narrow ladder that run up, dingy, and straight, and steep before me. He had unclosed a small door, hitherto unsuspected, in the plank partition, while my back was turned, and was compelling me to enter it. I disengaged myself without difficulty from his grasp—his object seemed only to exhibit the mysterious stairway—and he stood holding the door back, as if quite unconscious of having offended me, until I sprang round with my hand uplifted to strike him.

He sank on his knees with a moaning whimper, such as a beaten hound makes sometimes, as if sorrow got the better of mere physical pain, and covered his face with his hands.

"Oh ! don't strike me, Miss Lilian," he said. "Tell my mammy, but don't strike me *yourself*!"

"You have behaved outrageously to me !" I said, dropping my hand as soon as I recovered my voice, of which terror and surprise had for a moment deprived me ; "and you shall be beaten for your conduct, and sent away from Bouverie forever."

"Oh, Miss Lilian !" The piteous moaning continued, and the contortions and shudderings were wonderful to behold. I could scarcely help laughing at them in the midst of my rage. He could not have employed more effectual means of disarming me.

"What does this mean, after all, Pat ?" I said, mollified by his excessive and caricatured agony. "What is this door used for ?—how did you find it out ?—and how dare you show it to me ?"

"Oh ! Miss Lilian, I just wanted you to see the pretty old play-



actor man, and the show upstairs, because you gave me your Bible ball. One night I watched when Fabius came down, and I seed in the moonshine how he opened and shut the door; I watched him a heap of nights before I crept up the ladder, and then I went up so easy that the very mice could not hear me; and I seed the old king in his crimson gownd, or maybe it was the Pope himself I seen. And the Mistress was there, dressed like a beautiful queen—but I knowed her for all that; and Dr. Quintil was there; and they talked, but I did not know much what they said. And then I crept back, softly—softly, and all at once I fell at the foot of the ladder, and rolled out in the cellar, and burst the spring open—and see, Miss Lilian, how loose it is.”

I looked in the direction of his pointing hand, but as he attempted to rise, I held him firmly in his kneeling position by pressing my hand on his head, as I have seen children hold down a Newfoundland dog.

“Go on, Pat,” I said sternly; “make a clean breast of it at once. Imagine that I represent Bishop Clare.”

“And that is all, Miss Lilian; indeed, ma’am, it is,” with piteous grimaces. “Let me go, Miss Lilian, and I will never trouble you no more.”

“How often have you been up there, Pat, and whom have you told of this adventure?”

“The witches punished me so, that night, I never went back; and—and I was afraid to tell mammy, and I never told nobody before,” sobbing fearfully.

“Put your hands together, Pat.”

“Oh, Miss Lilian, what are you going to do to me?”

“Only to tie them with my rope;” and the great booby put his shapeless hands together, and was securely bound as a punishment for his misdemeanor. Having accomplished this feat, I permitted him to rise and depart, first assuring him that if his visit to that basement room was ever repeated, Dr. Quintil would cause him to be hung in the orchard, as the gardener Smith had hung his sheep-stealing dog !” To which threat he listened with deprecating faith and solemnity.

Before I left the conservatory, I closed the newly discovered door, and mastered the secret of the spring which, as Pat had said, was loosened so as to show on examination between the starting planks. I saw now that a brick partition had first existed, and that the slight screen of plank had been thrown before it, so as to square the room, and inclose the steps which, as there was a stairway elsewhere for all household purposes, were not of course a general necessity. The ladder had, evidently then, been placed there for some peculiar emergency, and with an object of secrecy; and connecting these convictions with the vague disclosure of Pat McCormick, I felt strengthened in the belief that had, for some time past, wrestled dimly in my mind. Moreover, I felt determined now to place this matter beyond a doubt, if daring of mine could do this; and having achieved such knowledge as I desired, I would tell my grandmother of the idiot’s discovery, that she might take measures to guard against further mischief from that source.

But how confess the part I had resolved to take in the matter ? Was it, after all, necessary to refer to this at all ? And even should she question me, was I bound to reply to her interrogatories ? I would be silent, sullen, *injured* ; she would never dream the truth, and it was with me optional to reveal it or not. I

would conquer this mystery that had been shut away from me with such system and unwearying care, and preserve it still a mystery, if only to feel that I had triumphed over every obstacle caution or vigilance could oppose to unshrinking will I would do this, or die!"

## CHAPTER IV.

READER, do you know what it is to have bad and bitter blood conflicting, in your veins, with the mild and milky stream that flows through them in greater volume and tranquillity? And has it been your lot to feel, at some time of your life, that this swelling tide had power (unsuspected before) to carry everything before it? If not, take no merit to yourself for having proved immaculate and defied temptation.

Sailing on the Atlantic ocean, the eye of the voyager is arrested by the singular appearance presented by a current of water darker and infinitely more rapid than the surrounding sea, and said by sailors to be twice as salt and bitter. The pilot carefully keeps the ship beyond its strictly defined limits; the stormy petrel that rests on its surface, rises with difficulty or is submerged; and the small boat (launched from the vessel for some emergency), becomes unmanageable, if chance or necessity subject it to the influence of its rapid current.

Through my veins there surged a gulf stream such as this, just as separate from my more universal nature, just as irresistible in its effects, just as wisely shunned by my reason, as the current I have referred to by the wary mariner. As old Bianca had said, "the blood of the Bouveries boiled in my veins," that blood which had flowed ever to evil; and at last disappeared, only to form an undercurrent in the heart that held a more uniform and steady stream as its abiding influence.

There was a legend in my grandfather's family, to the effect

that the Norman blood they boasted had flowed lineally from a pirate's veins, and had later been crossed by intermarriage with the daughter of a famous French charlatan who had given gold for rank! Be this as it may, my lineage on my father's side was of undoubted purity to the very fount, and my grandmother had sprung from old and respected Virginian parentage; so that the balance of good, at least, was in my favor.

Yet through my whole life I have felt the occasional power of the gulf stream, and dreaded its fierce current, though time, and sorrow, and experience (the last a wary pilot) have shown me lately how better to avoid it, than in my impulsive youth. And it may be that whatever of power, of genius, or of passion have been mine, I owed to this conflict of two natures in one weak breast, teaching, as it did, the necessity of strength, of self-command and forbearance, to the overruling soul itself.

I have nothing to urge in extenuation of the deliberate and willful misconduct that followed the discovery of the secret door. I might plead that I was lonely, and that excitement, under the circumstance of peculiar isolation from all congenial companionship to which I was consigned, possessed for me an unusual charm. I might even urge the precedents of female curiosity, from Eve to Fatima, in extenuation of the determined spirit of investigation that possessed me.

But I scorn to seek my apology either in circumstances or natural motives, or the example of others. I had been taught better; I *knew* better, and the voice of conscience was silenced in the hurricane of error and self-will. I had even, for a time, a sense of perverse enjoyment in my power to triumph over precept and precaution; and the temptation that beset me was as strong and *irresistible in its way*, as the love of Romeo or the hate of Hamlet,

or the ambition of Macbeth. The boat of reason had drifted into that fatal gulf stream, and was the plaything of its force!

The seed the poor idiot had carelessly thrown down on a fertile soil germed at once and bore its bitter harvest. For three days the conflict went on, I moved like one in a dream ; I could not sleep nor eat, nor study, nor think, nor pray, for the whirl of fighting emotions.

The steep black stair was always before my eyes ; the fantastic madman, such I concluded Pat McCormick's old play-actor man to be, ever busy in my brain, the desire to see and know paramount and unquenchable. Thus wrought the black and bitter blood of Bouverie !

It was on the evening of the third day that the opportunity I coveted for putting my design into execution presented itself for the first time since it had occurred to me. My grandmother retired to her room early in the evening, as she not unfrequently did, and closed it for the night, leaving me in the dining-room with Bianca, who was charged to see me in my chamber before she left me. Dr. Quintil, too, had gone to his study, probably, on this occasion, and feigning weariness I retired early, dismissing Bianca, who insisted somewhat on seeing me in bed, at my chamber door, and waiting afterward with almost uncontrollable impatience for the sound of her parting footsteps. At last I heard the pantry closed, and I knew that Bianca had made her exit from the dining-room, through that outlet to the wing, carrying the key away with her, as she invariably did, after fastening all the openings of the house securely for the night, and drawing the ponderous bolt last of all across the front door of entrance.

The clock had not long struck nine when the house was still ;

but I sat and pondered my project in doubt and terror, half an hour longer.

At length I rose, and after locking that door of my chamber that gave into my grandmother's, I stole quietly from the other, and unclosed with trembling fingers the bolt of one of the triangular closets from which the staircase in common use descended to the basement scullery. I soon found myself in the plant-chamber, through the barred windows of which the moonlight streamed, throwing out sharp and startling shadows from every object it touched, and glistening on the steel of the spring, between the crevices of the planks, of which the partition was composed, so as to reveal it more clearly than impartial daylight could have done.

To press this firmly, to start the door open, and leave it so to clamber up the dark, steep ladder seemed to me but the work of a moment. When I reached the summit I found myself in a small, square, but lofty hall, lit from above by the rays of light streaming from an open door at the head of the spiral stairs that sprang up light, and apparently unsupported, from this landing. I could not doubt that I stood in the division of the lateral passage, corresponding with my own chamber, and that the mystery that guarded its access was now explained to me. A door dimly defined by a wavering hue of light beneath it cast from the blazing wood-fire within, indicated that entrance to my grandmother's room from which I had seen her emerge with Bishop Clare, and which had been so carefully closed during my whole stay at Bouverie. I passed it with a stealthy step and beating heart. All was silent within. She slept probably ! and yet, "What if she should suddenly unclothe the door and appear before me, either going or returning !" "What would become

of me ; how could I meet such a reprimand as hers would be ? Her very look would kill me ?”

The suggestion, full of terrors as it was, gave speed to my steps. I flew lightly up the winding stairway, and so rapidly that my head reeled with the rotary motion to which it was subjected by my whirling flight. I reached the summit, breathless for a moment, and stood holding firmly by the padded banisters, covered like the steps and the hall below, with some heavy woollen material to prevent sound, until I recovered somewhat from both fatigue and fright. I had gone too far to recede ; I took what courage I could and crossed the landing to the open door, whence the light emanated, and looked timidly in.

The room into which it gave was empty ! It was a spacious, circular apartment, vaulted and domed, and corresponding evidently with the lower hall—but far more lofty and elegantly proportioned. In the centre, immediately under the skylight, was a large, round table covered with a crimson cloth, on which burned an Argand lamp and several wax-candles, in sticks of ormolu. Books and papers were scattered profusely over this table, on which a portfolio of colored prints lay open.

A solid marble counter, as it appeared to me, was placed almost against the extreme wall of the apartment, so as to block a central door, leading out, perhaps, on the balcony over the vestibule (but this I did not think of then), and covered with curious utensils in glass and copper, whose uses were entirely unknown to me.

A few long chairs, some hanging bookshelves and maps, and a cabinet of minerals, completed the scant furniture of this apartment, the walls of which were lined with pictures, and the floor covered with crimson baize, so fitted as to render footsteps inaudible



The sound of voices beyond, irresistibly impelled me to proceed ; and, with a hardihood I could neither account for nor withstand, I crossed the hall, and stood near the half open door from which the sounds issued. By the merest chance, the faces of all the inmates were averted, or I must have been discovered at once ; but I speedily assumed an attitude that would have afforded me concealment, even had they turned, and eagerly surveyed the scene.

A fire burned low in the grate, in front of which a table was placed, bearing lights, and fruit, and wine, and perhaps other refreshments. The company, consisting of a lady and two gentlemen, sat with their backs to this table, gathered closely around the hearth, and engaged in earnest conversation, to which at first I paid but little attention ; on the other side of the table, with his face turned also to the fire, stood Fabius, in the attitude of a soldier on guard, holding a silver salver shield-fashion on his breast.

One of the gentlemen was already known to me. The patient and somewhat peculiar attitude, the dark brown clustering curls, the curved shoulders, the calmly folded hands, were those of Dr. Quintil. My grandmother was dressed in one of those dresses I had admired and coveted. A garnet-colored velvet, trimmed royally, and made with pointed corsage and large flowing sleeves became her well. Over her head was thrown a golden net, and her cheek, half turned to me at times, wore its crimson flush of feeling or excitement.

But the third occupant of the hearth-stone was one I had never seen before, though the mystery of his presence had long weighed on my spirit ; and oh ! how impressive—how thrilling its reality was to me at last ! At first I beheld only the long, sweeping, *steel-colored* hair, as it fell over his collar almost to his shoulders,

and the outline of a form which, though emaciated, still presented traces of remarkable symmetry. But, when he turned, I searched every feature of his face with breathless eagerness.

Though changed by time, by ill-health, by trouble, perhaps, I could not doubt that the original of the picture I had uncovered two years before in the drawing-room was before me.

The forehead of the mysterious stranger was high, narrow, and projecting ; the eyes, small, and dark, and deeply set, were of intense and glistening brilliancy ; the face, of unusual paleness, was of olive tint, and slender proportions, to which the regularity and delicacy of the profile gave repose and dignity, otherwise wanting, for every feature seemed imbued with separate life and mobility.

The restless eye, the dilating nostril, the wreathing, quivering, brilliant, yet sardonic lip, now closely set as with clasps of steel—now straight, now curved, now revealing its treasures of ivory teeth, in a smile of more than womanish sweetness—now wearing an expression of almost wolfish fierceness, or the despairing anguish of a doomed and hopeless soul. These mobile features, and especially that flexible mouth, indicated a nature too subtle, too changeful, too willful, yet too sensitive, either for happiness or strength.

Never have I beheld such a Protean countenance, nor one that so well portrayed the inward man ! Yet think not, that inexperienced as I was, and in that brief scrutiny of mingled terror and interest, I arrived by any just process of thought at these conclusions. The result of this subsequent analysis was stamped on my mind then and there, as the solution of difficult problems is often instinctively obtained by those incapable of mathematical ratiocination. Instinct works well, when nerved by strong excitement, such as sustained me in this momentary survey.

The face on which my gaze was riveted was quickly turned from me again ; and now my grandmother arose from her seat beside him, and pointed to the table, still spread with its untouched collation.

"Your food stands untouched to-night, Erastus," I heard her say ; "you grow thinner, paler, day by day, and your loss of appetite is cause enough for this. Eat, or your strength will decline."

"I find a few drops of the elixir of gold more strengthening to me at times than food itself, and this I keep always by me ; but when you are here, madam," he added, "I need neither to sustain me."

"How long will you continue," she asked, unheeding the fine courtesy of his remark, "to make use of this fabulous instrument of good—this subtle poison, that wastes your substance, and destroys your health ? Will nothing convince you ?"

"I *am* convinced," he interrupted mildly, "of its complete efficacy in sustaining my feeble life ; and of the glory the discovery, or rather perfection, of so potent an agent of health, will yet confer on me and mine."

"Glory !"—with what bitterness she repeated the word—with what speechless sorrow she gazed on him !

"Resume your reading, if you please, Dr. Quintil," she said, after a pause, during which the person addressed had taken down a volume laid open on the mantel-piece, and was slowly turning over its leaves. "There is something in that picture of Acadian life irresistibly beautiful, I think, and far more cheering to one shut away from nature than any conversation of ours could be."

Without hesitation or the slightest reply, Dr. Quintil took up the thread of the poem he had been reading, and traced it on me-

chanically, as if he had been only an instrument for another to play on, until arrested by the uplifted hand of him they called "Erastus."

"It is beautiful," he said; "I acknowledge that; but it touches no spring of my being, either in the past or present. One blast from Byron's bugle were worth twenty strains like this—one breeze from the Æolian harp of Shelley, more soul-stirring than whole orchestras of such music. Take *him* down, Quintil—the man whose heart remained untouched when his body was burnt to ashes on the Tuscan coast—and give me the 'Ode to the West Wind.' It will comfort me to-night, the grand—the godlike fugue! And hark, how that very wind, perhaps, is blowing! But no," he added, "never mind!" as Dr. Quintil arose to obey his request. "You read very well, Quintil, but you could not manage *that*—few can; I could once, but now—but now"—

And he sat for a few moments with his head bowed as if transfixed in the past, or crushed, perhaps, by the present; then, in low distinct tones, more thrilling—more musical than any I had ever heard before, shall ever listen to again, and with that peculiar "abandon," that evidences entire forgetfulness of, or indifference to the presence of witnesses, he gave the conclusion of the ode he had spoken of, beginning with the lines:

"Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud;  
I fall upon the thorns of life—I bleed!  
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed  
One *too* like thee! Tameless and swift, and proud—"

And continuing to the close, he went on:

"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is;  
What, if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies,

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness! Be thou, spirit fierce,  
My spirit! *be thou me*, impetuous one;  
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,  
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth,  
And by the incantation of this verse,  
Scatter—as from an unextinguished hearth,  
Ashes and sparks—my word among mankind!"

These verses he gave utterance to with a power and pathos, subdued as both were, to which no words of mine could do justice, and I felt thrilled and uplifted by the inspiration of both author and medium as I had never felt before.

"A pastoral poem in an age of progress is surely out of place, behind the times," he said, when the echo of the poem, if so I may express it, had time to die away in his own mind, and the silence of others seemed to grow oppressive.

"And yet," rejoined Dr. Quintil, "it is a noble thing, methinks, for a great poet, to throw out his powers freely to celebrate the legends of his country. Thus did Homer, thus did Walter Scott; let our bard persevere, and we will crown him yet our "*national poet*," a higher post than Poet Laureate of England has ever attained. A few more such strains, and he will be embalmed in the heart of the people, to live while the land bears its name!"

My grandmother here took up the discourse, and under the cover of this conversation I retreated as carefully as I had approached. Again I scrambled down the dark ladder, loosening, as I tried to reach its rounds, a trap-door which had been propped back, but which closed with a noiseless fall after me, leaving me in utter darkness. The moon was now veiled by heavy clouds,

and the plant-room was so dark that I found difficulty in groping my way to the basement apartment used as a sort of scullery, and from which the stairs in general use ascended.

These, too, were steep and narrow, and dark, and when I reached my room and struck a light, I found my dress half torn off, and my hands bleeding in several places. I did not say my prayers that night, but slunk like a guilty creature to my bed, with the mental resolution complete, however, never to return to the upper story, until invited to do so by my grandmother !

" Yet, will this request ever be made," I thought ; " and what, *what* does all this mean ?" And I lay with my face covered by my hands, conjecturing, marvelling, excited beyond any possibility of repose for hours, at the end of which I heard my grandmother enter through her cautiously opened door, and her low, sobbing voice soothed me to an unquiet slumber.

I had heard before, at rare intervals, that sound of sorrow from her chamber, and going to her impulsively on one occasion, she had lifted before me a face so grave in its dignified displeasure, though bathed in tears, that I shrank away rebuked from her presence.

Oh ! luxury of solitary grief—sole consolation of the broken-hearted—how dear thou art—how little understood by those who have no experience of suffering !

Pillow, that wet with tears hast so often smothered the moans of deep affliction, and received as in a friendly bosom the quivering and passionate face of *extremest* agony ! Dost thou not seem thereafter an altar on which sacrifice to God has been offered ?

Calm, and even with sad smiles, the mourner rises from thy sustaining ministry, and through her household, or the crowded streets, or the homes of others, pursues her quiet away !

She speaks of common things, she, whose whole life is a secret tragedy ! Her lips receive their daily food ; she bears her daily burdens, waiting, yearning, pining for the shadow, for the welcome soul-sustaining hour, when she shall be alone.

Sympathy is precious, as was the spikenard balm that Mary poured on the feet of Jesus, but solitude is sacred, for it means communion with God himself ; and accursed be that falcon eye of vigilance that pursues and mocks, under the guise of solicitude, and with its stern compulsion of self-command, the surging anguish of the stricken and bereaved !

Is it nothing in the estimate of those who *preach of patience*, to move, unmoved, all day through the routine of duty, to utter no wild cry when a word is suddenly spoken, that makes the heart leap like a steed that snaps his bridle at the explosion of a gun ?

Is it nothing to such as these that tears are swallowed with every mouthful of loathed yet necessary food ; and that there exists sometimes, even when smiles are on the lip, that nameless sinking away of the whole being, as though its fountain-springs were failing at their source in the arid desert of unseen despair !

What more do you ask—oh, practical philosopher, preacher, and pharisee !—what more ?

Will you not suffer the doomed martyr to rest from the stake for a little while, even while fresh fagots are preparing for the half-exhausted fire

The crowd will re-assemble, the pangs will recommence. Suffer, I entreat you, the tortured wretch to sit for a space upon the ground, among the ashes in the abandonment of self-pity, and gaze weeping upon her scars !

Leave self-command for the morrow !

## CHAPTER V.

WE met as usual at the breakfast-board on the morning succeeding my adventure. As far as appearances went at least there was no change ; but a great struggle was going on in the breast of one of that household, destined ere long to burst to light, and so find partial relief.

I began to see for the first time in my life that there was comfort in one peculiarity of the Catholic faith, and that a great principle in human nature was carried out in the confessional. It may be, it no doubt *is*, sometimes perverted (of what institution cannot this be said ?) but that to the lonely and sick-hearted, yearning for sympathy and counsel, it bears a world of strength and consolation, cannot be with any truth or plausibility even denied.

Disinterested counsel ! Where else can it be so certainly obtained ? Sympathy divested of earthly motives ! from whom other than the anointed priest of God have we a right to expect it ? Acknowledgment of error, so dear a privilege to the noble and repentant of heart ? Go make it to your nearest friend, and wear the yoke of shame for ever afterward ! There is not magnanimity enough among men, nor women either, to justify such a proceeding ; nor to recognize the true nobility of voluntary self-humiliation.

In less than a week after my visit to the sealed chamber of Bouverie, during which I was a prey to the tortures of remorse and shame, a conversation at the dinner-table seemed to my



morbid mind to point to the discovery of my transgression. Doctor Quintil was fond of metaphysical discussion, a species of argument from which my grandmother usually shrank ; but on this occasion she had entered with much spirit into the subject proposed, and finally, the discourse settled on an estimate of mental qualities, made by a French philosopher, and entirely differing from the commonly received opinions as to the scale in which they should be considered.

"He says that order is happiness," said Dr. Quintil ; "and I suppose, that, involving as it usually does, peace and permanence, he may be right."

"It is the best compromise we can make *with* happiness in this unsettled world," rejoined my grandmother ; "but as for the thing itself, it involves some higher elements, I am thinking."

"Keeping my closet in order would never make me happy !" I broke in, with impulsive levity.

"But keeping your mind and body and temper in order *would* make you happy," said Dr. Quintil, "if anything earthly could. All other desirable consequences would follow such a state of things."

"I agree fully with our philosopher, that patience is the noblest quality known to man," my grandmother said—"I know no other so godlike."

"Oh, grandmother ! I said ; a hen is patient !"

"Jesus was patient," she answered, gravely ; "patient and long-suffering ; we need no other example."

Constancy would have been the better term, I think," said Doctor Quintil ; "for it involves patience and something higher, and that after all is what our philosopher was trying to *arrive at*."

"Constancy is a good thing in its way," my grandmother remarked, drily enough, I thought ; "but oftener an evidence of weakness, than of strength, I believe, if truth were told. No ! abstract patience is the greater quality of the two—the greatest quality any human being can possess."

"He esteems envy the worst passion," said Dr. Quintil.

"And cowardice is the meanest, grandmother, I think ; "for that includes falsehood and baseness of all sorts, does it not ?" I hazarded.

"I think not ; a man may be a physical coward and yet love the truth and his fellow-creatures. I believe, Lilian, that I place *undue curiosity* still lower in the moral scale than cowardice, although one Frenchman thinks otherwise. Curiosity, Lilian," (speaking very emphatically) "is the quality I *most detest*."

And she fixed her eyes on me with a peculiar and unmistakable meaning. I rose and left the table in tears.

She had struck home, and I went weeping to my room. A few moments later I heard my grandmother calling me from her chamber. I obeyed her summons instantly, and stood with downcast eyes before her chair.

"You resented my remark just now, Lilian, as if you were conscious of possessing that hideous quality—the sin that wrecked the human race ! Be good enough to explain, *why* you appropriated the observation ?"

"Oh, grandmother !" and I bowed my face in my hands, "Lilian," she went on, evidently moved, for her voice trembled ; "when you withdrew the curtain so sacred in my eyes, was there no internal monitor to rebuke—to warn you that you were doing wrong ? Are you hardened in self-will ? Lilian, I had feared this."

"Indeed, indeed," I said, "I have wished to tell you,"—and I removed my hands from my face and gazed earnestly into hers—"I know that I am very mean, very degraded in your sight, and that my curiosity has led me to this discovery of your secret, so painful to us both ; but"——

She rose—she stood before me with flashing eyes and white and quivering lips, and blanching cheek, and grasped my shoulder with her bloodless hand—strong as steel, and cold as death.

"Child," she said, gasping for breath ; "speak truly, *what* have you discovered ?"

The flash of evidence was irresistible—I saw my mistake at once, and whither her reference pointed.

A day or two before, I had for the second time, unveiled my grandfather's picture, to convince myself of his identity with the concealed inmate of Bouverie. She had heard of or seen this probably unperceived by me. Her allusion was a literal one when she spoke of the curtain ; I had accepted it figuratively ; but it was too late to recede now. The whole truth must be told, and it were better thus. It was not until she repeated her question with all its first emphasis that I found courage to reply.

I sank on my knees and avowed the whole. As I proceeded in the story of my temptation, and succumbing to the master passion that had for a time possessed me, her face softened, relaxed, her hands dropped on her knees—for she had taken her seat again during my recital—and tears rolled over her pallid cheeks.

When I had concluded my relation, she held my hands mutely in her own for a long time. My face was hidden now in her lap ; but I felt her hot slow tears falling one by one, on my bare neck, and quivering in my hair, each one a reproach and fiery anguish to my spirit.

"Lilian," she said at last, "I would have spared you this ; you were free, you were happy. I wished you to remain so ; but you have lain down your neck to the yoke of the Bouveries, and you must bear it—yet is it *hard to bear*. Concealment is a wearing thing to any mind ; but above all, is it unendurable to the young and light-hearted." She paused for a minute, and then continued—

"It was a great—an untold pleasure to me, to witness your uncontrolled and innocent joy, and to feel that you were shielded from the sorrow of this house. You were to me, my child, as a flower—a bird—a ray of sunshine, piercing these gloomy walls—a direct and palpable gift from a pitying Father to one of his most desolate children. Thus I regarded you. I am sorry this delusion is dispelled—I am stricken thus early by your hand ; and, for your part, you have chosen the harder lot, when both were spread before you. The shadow of a great sorrow, and a great shame, must fall over you, and darken your young life. Can you bear it, Lilian ?—can you bear it ?"

"Grandmother," I said, looking up, and clasping my hands on her knee, "we will bear this burden together, and you shall teach me how to do my part."

"No, Lilian, I am nothing in a case like this. Who will sustain you under its crushing necessities ?—not I, surely, made weak and apathetic by long suffering. Who, then, Lilian ?"

"God will sustain me, grandmother," I said, rising to my feet, and standing erect before her.

She regarded me with earnest attention. "It may be so," she said at last, with solemn humility. "I *trust* you are nearer to him than I have ever been. He has his own good reasons for receiving some, and rejecting others. I bow, but understand not."

Then, after gazing forward intently and silently for a few minutes, she said, in low, thrilling accents, as she clasped her hands—accents of indescribable pathos—“It is long since *He* has withdrawn from me !”

I shall never forget the surpassing sorrow that these simple words revealed, nor the effect they created on my heart. I trembled, and the cold dew started to my brow ; and, for a moment, I felt as if the floor was sliding from under my feet.

What substance was there—what reality—what hope—what stay in life or death, if this could be ? To be God-forsaken ! I had never thought that there could be so terrible a doom—I would not think so now !

Yet I could find no words wherewith to gainsay that accusation—for such I felt it—against my Creator. I could only mutely pray, then and thenceforth, that the heart that uttered it might, through the extent of his mercy, be brought near to its Maker again.

And impotent to aid, I withdrew silently.

## CHAPTER VI

SOME effective threat or punishment—milder, I trust, however, in its character, than the torture of the darning-needle and the biscuit-board—must have sealed the poor idiot's lips. He never passed me, for a long time after my confession to my grandmother, without deprecating signs of fear or entreaty ; and his whole demeanor was calculated to inspire both pity and derision.

Sometimes he would clasp one of his huge claw-like hands tightly over his mouth, and extend the other in a cringing way, as he had done when begging for my "Bible ball," as he called the plaything—poor wretch, what a conceit ! Again, veiling his eyes with his extended fingers, he would watch me through the crevice between them, as I have seen some preachers do their congregation ; or, perhaps, loll out his great red tongue at me, in a manner common to fatuitous people.

The entrance to the secret stair had been altered, I knew, in a single night—Fabius and Dr. Quintil working hard to effect this change before morning, consisting, as it did, simply in removing the ladder to another room—thereafter kept locked—and pointing it to the same landing through a different opening. All traces of the secret door in the conservatory were effaced ; and Pat McCormick's idiotic curiosity, if it still existed, was completely foiled. But was it safe to trust to the feebleness of his memory, or the existence of momentary terror, as safeguards against his future revelations ?

"Why not send Pat away altogether, grandmother?" I asked, "he is so irresponsible!"

"Send him where, Lillian? To whisper and scatter our secret of life and death throughout the land? No; we must keep him here, and control him. Besides, his mammy is entitled to some consideration in the matter. She is an old family servant, though never a favorite one of mine; and necessity has placed me greatly in her power. She has my confidence."

I would have said, "What is this secret of life and death to which you allude? Why am I to be shut out from confidence accorded to servants? Tell me all, and I will never betray you, while reason remains to me. More than this, my own blood is concerned in the mystery, and I have a right to know."

But her manner precluded words like these. It rose like an icy barrier between us; and, remembering that she had esteemed patience a "godlike quality," I determined to lean on this staff, and await the issue. Think not that my curiosity was laid at rest—I cannot boast of a conquest over self like this; but it had assumed a nobler shape since the conviction had forced itself on my reason that the lonely occupant of those upper chambers was he from whom my very life had flowed.

Nothing of this sort had been explained to me; the resemblance to the picture in the drawing-room, the spoken name "Erastus," were the tenures to which my belief attached itself; and something like electric affinity seemed to bind—to draw me to that desolate being, an exile from society, from nature, from change, from all that cheers and animates human existence, and makes it worthy of the name of life.

Ineffable pity was mingled with every thought of him, and I yearned with an intense desire to know the cause of his sufferings.

and to be permitted to aid—if such power indeed were mine—in alleviating them.

My grandmother had, in the beginning of her knowledge of my discovery, exacted from me a solemn pledge of secrecy. She had made me swear on that book which she knew I revered with no common reverence, that no circumstance in life should extract from me one word, spoken or written, on the subject of the concealed inmate of Bouverie.

Having done this, she seemed to dismiss the subject from all further consideration. Her cheerfulness returned, and her manner to me was more than ever frank and conciliating, and even affectionate. Yet, as she had said, the shadow of concealment fell darkly over me, opposed, as it was, to every instinct of my nature. I was constrained and silent. I moped in lonely places. I grieved, more than ever, for Jasper's sympathy and counsel—my refuge, hitherto, when distressed—and chafed against my stagnant and companionless life with rebellious bitterness. This mood of mine did not pass unobserved—at least Dr. Quintil spoke to me about it.

"Our bird is silent," he said one day, when he saw me more than usually depressed—"silent and ill at ease! I miss that lark's voice in the morning. I have not heard my Lilian's joyous carol this many a day."

I hung my head without replying.

He took my hand kindly. "I know all, Lilian," he said, "and have made every allowance for youthful indiscretion; you must not grieve any longer."

"Does Jasper know," I asked, "of him I mean?"

"Jasper does know," he replied; "but between you two there can be no communion on that subject. To him as well as to



yourself, that occupant—those chambers—must remain unnamed, unseen and unexplored.”

“Oh, Dr. Quintil, have you banished him from his father, if such indeed he is? That is so dreadful!” And I grasped the hand that held mine, in an agony of pity. “You have assumed a terrible office!” I murmured low, but the whisper did not escape his ear.

He made no answer at first, but dropping my hand, commenced walking the room in almost breathless agitation. I had rarely seen him so excited—so angry, perhaps.

“You judge me too harshly, Lilian,” he said; “yet I confess, the case does seem a hard one; but that is your fault—you jump too hastily to conclusions. There is deep-rooted prejudice and hatred, almost animosity, to be contended with in that quarter. Jasper cannot appear before him; he would destroy him, probably; we have no reason to think otherwise.”

“He would not harm me I know, even if he is mad,” I rejoined. “I am not afraid of madmen, or of anything that suffers. Our old gardener went mad at Taunton Tower, and I was the only person that he would take food from afterward until he died!”

“Child, child, there is no question of madness here. Would—oh, would to God—there ever could have been. He that you refer to is not mad, only very peculiar and—and—unfortunate (let the word pass); no one must approach him unbidden.” And again he walked the room for a few minutes in silent agitation. “Lilian,” he said, pausing suddenly in his pace and looking at me fixedly, “you must make an end of this; you must drive this matter from your mind; in justice, in honor, you must do this. Try and forget that there is anything more in this habitation, than

you saw during the first year of your stay. You were happy here then."

"Yes," I said, "Jasper was here, and time passed differently. But now everything is changed, and dark and dull. I have been the cause of unhappiness to all of you—to him, to you, to my grandmother, to myself—and I am sorry that I ever came among you only to trouble and annoy. And now this last most fervent hope is taken away from me. I had thought to go to him, to comfort him, to aid in caring for him in every way; for already I feel that he is near to me, and I stand prepared to love him."

"You are unreasonable now, as are all passionate people; you will think better of this hereafter; yet if your inclination leads you to leave Bouverie regretting, as you do, your advent here, I think your grandmother will not oppose it; and I deem it my duty to tell you, under these circumstances, that a very favorable opportunity for casting your lot elsewhere is now afforded you. When you are calmer I will explain this to you, and leave the matter to your own dispassionate decision. In the meantime, rest assured that no event of the last ten years has given us half so much pleasure as your coming to Bouverie. Yet I feel that it must be a prison to energies like yours, and cannot wonder that you desire to leave its gloom and monotony behind you."

So speaking in calm, cold accents, he passed from the apartment, leaving me greatly disconcerted.

Two hours later I was summoned to his study by Bianca, who found me sitting just where he had left me, with the traces of tears on my face, which moved her to compassionate remark. "What has gone wrong with you, Miss Lilian?" she asked; "you have not seemed yourself lately, at all. I am afraid you take on too much about Mister Jasper."

"Give me some cool water, Bianca, and tell Dr. Quintil I will be with him in a few minutes; and don't ask me any questions, if you love me."

The good creature fulfilled all my mandates; and with as serene a countenance as I could command, I followed her to Dr Quintil's presence.

"Sit down, Lilian," he said when, looking up from his book, he saw that I stood before him, for I had entered noiselessly; "I was not aware of your presence; sit down and read this letter."

And he gave me one that he drew from his pocketbook, stamped with a foreign postmark. My amazement was at its height when I found that it was from Colonel De Courcy, the present possessor of Taunton Tower, and that it contained a conditional offer for me, of home, education and suitable provision in after-life. What miracle had wrought this change, and melted this heart of ice, to flow in streams of genial fellowship and humanity?

I could only conjecture what had effected this alteration in his views, when I read, toward the conclusion of the letter, that he had, within the year, adopted the orphan children of his sister, who had been to him once as a child herself, although her ill-starred marriage had long separated their fortunes.

All was forgiven now; she and her husband were both dead, and the son and daughter for whom she entreated protection on her dying bed, were not rejected. He determined to keep them with him, and educate them at home by means of masters; and that companionship might not be wanting to his niece, he invited me to come and share all her advantages equally and impartially.

There was something said in the letter, about "concentrating

fortunes, should inclination so direct," to which I paid but little attention at the time, though later its significance did not escape me. It was evidently his plan (I found on re-reading this letter months afterward), to unite me in marriage with his nephew, should we so incline on acquaintance, and thus secure the prosperity of all connected with him.

He mentioned that Lady Torrington had gone abroad in feeble health, and that in case of her death, her portion of the estate would revert to me, the only survivor, save herself, of her mother's family. This, he remarked, would make me independent, had he not determined to effect a settlement upon me in case I complied with his request; which he seemed to consider a mere matter of course that I would do joyfully. He invited Dr. Quintil to be his guest while in Scotland, should it suit his convenience to cross the seas with me; advising him, otherwise, to consign me and my effects to the care of the British consul in New York, a personal friend of his, who would take pleasure in sending me safely over. To my grandmother he did not even allude, the letter being addressed wholly to Dr. Quintil, with the request that it might be communicated to me, and answered speedily.

"Has my grandmother seen this letter, Dr. Quintil?" I asked as I handed it back to him with non-chalance—real, not affected.

"Not yet. I deemed it my duty to submit it first to you, and learn your wishes. The matter might then be broken gradually to her."

"Do you object to answering it before she sees it?" I asked.

"It depends, Lillian—it depends," he replied, greatly agitated, I could see from the pallor of his lips, "on *what* that reply is to be. It would certainly be unbecoming in me—should you conclude to avail yourself of this invitation—to—to answer the letter

without consulting her who stands to you now in the attitude of—mother !”

I smiled. “You know me but little, Dr. Quintil, if you think I could for one moment meditate any answer but one.”

“And that, Lilian ?” He had hold of my hand, now he understood me, and the tears stood in his great grey eyes.

“Is—oh ! you know, dearest—dearest friend ;” and I hugged his ungraceful arm in both of mine, “that, until you drive me from you, I will never leave you while life is mine ! How could you dream for a moment of any other decision ?” and I kissed his large brown hand.

We wept together. It did us good to indulge the weakness of the moment, occasioned, as it was, by sentiments of no ordinary strength. Renewed tenderness and esteem sprang from this unequivocal rejection on my part of Colonel de Courcy’s liberal offer ; and it was with something of triumph that we went to my grandmother’s room, and laid before her both the invitation and its courteous but decided rejection.

I thought there was much meaning in the silent pressure of her hand, and the husky voice in which she said, with an effort at disinterestedness :

“Lilian, had you not better think this matter over ? You are rejecting opportunities I can never give you ; and I feel that my secret of life and death will be as safe with you in Taunton Tower as in Bouverie. Perhaps you had better not determine rashly, Lilian.”

“Grandmother, I believe you are tired of me, and want me to go.”

“Child—child, do not attempt to weigh my motives thus.”

“But I do not care, dear grandmother—I will not go. I will

be your old man of the sea, and stay and plague you always. For do you think, oh, do you think that any other place than Bouverie would ever seem like home to me now? And as to Colonel de Courcy," I said, indignantly, "I ignore him forever. He is no gentleman—no man of feeling even, to dare—to dare to leave your name unspoken, grandmother, in writing about your child!"

"I have never deserved his disdain," she said, in cold and subdued accents; "but I have taken no pains to explain to those English people my true position, and they may think what they please of me. At home I am known and respected, I believe—this suffices me."

My arms were around her neck—silently she pressed me to her heart; no further words were spoken. And, from this slight circumstance, my life seemed to take a new impetus; and my resolutions then formed, to abide by the wishes and counsel of those that loved me, uncomprehended as their motives might be, sustained me through another eighteen months of probation, of vain conjecture, and unexplained mystery.

## CHAPTER VII.

Our letters from Jasper were frequent, and very cheering. His health was improving under the peculiar treatment to which he was subjected by the learned physician in whose family he resided, and he was pursuing his art with interest and advantage. Though certainly not recognized as a sphere for painters, he had the good fortune to stumble across a gifted artist in Leyden, from whom he received valuable instruction. The fine library of the institution was also at his command, through the interest of his friend, Dr. Steinforth, and he was reading with avidity, such works as he had never been able to command before.

The life he was leading was evidently pleasant to Jasper, and at the expiration of one year's absence he demanded another, wherein to complete the experiments Dr. Steinforth was making on his limb, and his own studies, both in art and science.

It was Dr. Quintil's wish that Jasper should choose the career of letters, for which he thought the delicacy and fire of his intellect peculiarly befitted him. His infirmity had shut him out from a regular collegiate course, as it must have continued to do from either of the leading professions ; but his mind was richly stored with desultory lore, and it is from materials like these the greatest writers have wrought their fine gold of fancy, or of fact.

It is a dangerous experiment to tamper thus with a weak intellect. Tarpeia was overwhelmed, we are told, by the weight of ornaments the Roman soldiery threw on her as the price of her

treachery—and so the feeble fancy reels and staggers under the accumulation of poetry or fiction, and dies in its faint efforts to grasp the treasures with which its allegiance to the commonplace has been beguiled. But place a child of active brain, and quick imagination and judgment in a miscellaneous library where books, good and bad, serious and satirical, ponderous and frivolous abound in almost equal proportions, and ten to one that child will emerge from its unrestrained feast of intellect, strengthened, uplifted, educated, almost !

The thinking mind acts as an alembic on the indiscriminate materials it receives, and separates the dross from the purer essence—to reject the one and assimilate the other. Almost all the fine talkers and orators I have known have been formed in this way, and many of the poets of the world owe their fertility at least, to the wondrous store of desultory lore their eager minds have received through miscellaneous reading.

But as I have said, this is a dangerous experiment for the weak and uncertain intelligence, so apt to dwarf under intellectual burdens.

Better for such the old gymnastic training of memory and compelled attention—and homœopathic doses of information regularly administered.

Oh, Lindley Murray ! Has any thinking creature who has studied thy pages a doubt any longer that the bed of Procrustes did indeed exist ? Yet, some I believe, have been stretched advantageously to themselves on that rack of thine. But, woe ! for those whose feet projected beyond thy limits—and who have gone hobbling ever since in consequence of amputation then endured !

Dr. Quintil did not approve of Jasper's wish to make his art



the pivot of his existence. He had old-fashioned notions on this subject—and thought that when a man was painting he was amusing himself, as women do with embroidery. He could not look upon it as earnest work.

“A man should choose an occupation that will accompany him through life,” he said. “Artists have nearly all unattainable ideals in their own minds. By the time they arrive at middle-age they become convinced of this and grow dissatisfied with themselves and with their calling. The rest of life to such a man is a blank. This is the case in nine cases out of ten—the tenth man succeeds and carries out his views, merely because he has more energy, and less genius than the others, and a limited ideal.”

I had long since thrown off, or at least I so persuaded myself, that hallucination that Bishop Clare’s strangely ill-judged communication had wakened in my brain, and with renewed certainty and submission settled patiently down again into the belief that Jasper was my uncle.

There was not a word of reference to the past in any letter of his, although overflowing with affection and tender interest for me. It was evident to me now, that Bishop Clare had misunderstood his sentiments for me, and acted on vague suspicions—and on reading Jasper’s letter again I saw that it was possible those revelations he spoke of might have pointed to the discovery I had since made, and the propriety of communicating to me the existence of our mysterious inmate.

So, very dearly as I still loved Jasper, I was no longer moved by that excessive and morbid emotion as I felt it now to have been, that had for a time engrossed my being; I could even bear to hear with moderate composure those cruel jests that Dr. Quintil threw out from time to time, about the probability of his

becoming attached to Miss Steinforth, whose daguerreotype (the first we had ever seen) Jasper sent to us in a package with other matters.

The art was very imperfect then, but the shadow of a sweet young face was traced on the dusky metallic mirror before us with which the reflection of my own contrasted unfavorably, it seemed to me. Even Dutch, I thought, might fall sweetly from those mild and smiling lips ! But how could my Jasper love any one so well as he had loved me ? Uncle, brother, friend—it mattered little what—he was, I felt, the load-star of my life !

Yet a few months later, a very stringent test was put to my affections, and for a time the conflict was sharp and poignant, and the victory uncertain.

Before I was seventeen years old, Dr. Quintil and my grandmother determined that I should go forth from the seclusion of Bouverie and travel under his care through that wide and beautiful land, that was still a sealed book to me. We left home in the beginning of June, and were gone two months, during which time we ranged from Maryland to Canada, and saw all that was worthy of notice, whether in the shape of city or natural scenery.

I yet recall that journey with ever fresh sensations of delight, for to my nature and character it was strengthening and life-giving beyond anything that I had yet experienced. I was not a little gratified to find that many of the attentions extended to us were on my grandmother's account. In Washington, especially, that city of "effaced footsteps," where Mr. Bouverie had been at one time employed in some scientific capacity by government—and where he had exercised a distinguished hospitality—her claims were not forgotten.

I could not but observe, that my grandfather was rarely referred to, and always with constraint and evident reserve. On one of these occasions the speaker, a distinguished gentleman of our diplomatic corps touched on a chord with regard to him, that vibrated keenly in Dr. Quintil's bosom, and even in mine.

"Mrs. Bouverie sees no society, I am told, since her husband's death, either at home or abroad. Have I been correctly informed?" he inquired of my companion.

"You have," was the brief reply.

"Would she not, in favor of an old friend like me, break through her monastic resolution? I shall be in her immediate neighborhood before long, and it would gratify me much to see her."

"She cannot receive you, Mr. —," was the reply. "I am sorry, but such is her resolution. Her neighbors vainly sought to shake it for some time—and at last gave up the task as hopeless. With the exception of Bishop Clare, her confessor, her threshold is never traversed by any foot save that of an inmate."

"And these inmates?" Dr. Quintilian.

"Consist of three—her children and myself."

"There are reports abroad, my dear doctor," resumed Mr. —, with an earnest yet grieved expression, "which render it a matter of self-protection almost to Mrs. Bouverie that she should, however painful to herself, receive the occasional visits of disinterested friends. To these reports I have attached no attention, having known her well; but it would gratify me to be able to confute them from personal observation."

"And these reports?" asked Dr. Quintil, in a husky voice—and with a forehead gemmed with cold dew. "Favor me with

these, if you please ! Nay ! I will take no denial—speak out frankly, my friend ; I insist upon it ! These reports !”

“ Are to the effect, that she is insane,” added Mr. —, in hesitating words—and evidently pained to be the medium of such unfounded rumors.

Dr. Quintil smiled in the fullness of his relief—and the blood rushed back to his face.

“ Speak, Lilian !” he said, turning to me. “ Is your grandmother insane in being only too rational, or whither *tends* her mania ?”

“ Indeed, Mr. —,” I answered, “ Of all persons I have ever known she is, I think, the most entirely self-poised and philosophic. Her very melancholy has assumed a systematic cheerfulness which rarely abandons her—I would I were half so rational !”

“ I am relieved,” said Mr. —, “ and can imagine how a woman of feeling having received such a blow, should shrink afterward from contact with the world. Hers was truly a fiery trial !”

“ Come, Lilian,” said Doctor Quintil, “ or we shall be too late to fulfill our engagement,” and he literally hurried me away, cutting short the conversation with Mr. —, with a few hasty, half-muttered apologies.

I remarked afterward, that when this gentleman called on us again, he did not invite me to accompany him to the parlor of the hotel, but advised me to write home in his absence. Here also was food for conjecture !

It was at Niagara we met with Everard Howe. Standing by that mighty cataract, that seems the fittest emblem earth presents of fate itself, and absorbed by its awful presence, I dropped from

my hand the flowers and handkerchief it held, and saw them borne away on the rapid water. But not before a young man, who was poising his slender, yet well-knit figure on a pinnacle of rock, apparently in rather a jeopardous attitude, had made an ineffectual effort to recover them with the slight cane he carried—and at the same time hazarded a loss of balance that must have been fatal.

Touched by the impulsive courtesy of the act, Doctor Quintil approached him a few minutes later, and addressed him frankly.

“Had you fallen into the water while trying to recover that lace-trimmed rag and those frail blossoms, we could never have forgiven ourselves—your death would have lain at our door.” The person so addressed, who had by this time returned to the greater security of the bank—removed his hat with a frank smile and a graceful bow—revealing as he did so a head of glossy chestnut hair, and a set of dazzling teeth.

“I am sure I have no wish to make involuntary murderers of you,” he answered, “but I was really in no danger. I am very sure-footed, and have stood too often among the shrouds to feel much apprehension on *terra firma*.”

“When a man falls into the ocean there are reasonable hopes that he may be rescued,” resumed Dr. Quintil, shaking his head gravely; “but he who is once submerged in this tide, has no longer any hold on human life!”

“The thought is very solemn, but very exciting, too,” said the young man, archly. “A man might leave an enduring fame behind him who could breast these rapids! It is well worth a venture.”

Dr. Quintil, deceived by the earnestness he managed to throw into the last observation, began gravely to expostulate and reason

on the matter ; but the flash of merriment that darted from my eyes met those of the stranger, and we laughed outright at the same moment.

Thus began a pleasant acquaintance that gradually ripened into a graver intimacy, and finally occasioned the painful struggle of feeling I have elsewhere referred to.

I have known few persons in my whole life so winning as Everard Howe at twenty-five ! Not strictly handsome, he had so distinguished a bearing, and his expression was so ingenuous and intelligent, that the observer saw nothing to regret in the absence of mere regularity of feature. He might have owed something of the frankness of his manner to his profession, which seems singularly to mold most of its followers into more than drawing-room courtesy and gallantry of demeanor ; but I must think a good and loyal nature lies ever at the bottom of all thorough good breeding—such as his certainly was.

I had been accustomed to a higher reach of intellect and deeper culture than he possessed ; but I had met no person before, who had amused and entertained me half so much, and when he had travelled with us some weeks (for he left us no more from the time of our first meeting, and seemed to attach himself greatly to our society) I began to feel that he was quite an indispensable part of our enjoyment.

His interest in me seemed to spring to sudden life (although somewhat evidenced from the first) after he had heard my name. It was a familiar one to him, he said—he had friends who bore it; and I found later, that he had been in the part of Scotland from which I came—and had even seen Taunton Tower—and used an oar on the romantic lochs with which it was surrounded.

He was spending an idle summer he stated, in the United

States, had brought letters, but delivered none. Among the rest, I heard afterward, one to Dr. Quintil himself, which accounted for the perfect security my guardian had manifested in seeing me in the society of this stranger. I was too young and inexperienced to feel any surprise at this at the time ; but when I learned more of the world, I saw why I had been permitted to treat him rather as an established friend than a new acquaintance, and even encouraged to enjoy his society.

At the end of six weeks, when the time for separation arrived, I felt that a very close tie had been woven between us, and that it was hard to say farewell forever to this mere summer acquaintance. In truth, that brief but constant companionship had done more to unfold our true natures to each other, than years of mere routine and occasional visiting could have done. Yet I was scarcely prepared for the avowal he made to me on the evening before we parted.

He had come, he said, to the United States on purpose to see me, and was on his route to Bouverie, when we met at Niagara, having just crossed from Quebec, to which city he had sailed in a government vessel. He had kept his identity secret from me until then, fearing that my prejudice, frankly avowed from the first against Colonel de Courcy might extend to him, his nephew, and with Dr. Quintil's consent this was done. Oh ! that dear hypocrite. Everything was plain now ; but he should suffer for this by and by.

And now he laid his hopes of happiness at my feet, with what fortune and prospects earth contained for him. All this was very unexpected—very gratifying, too, reader, I am ashamed to confess—for I could only partly return his affection, and yet, it was too precious to me to cast aside forever.

So I compromised the matter for the time. I would write to him my final decision after I had seen my grandmother. He should come back a year later should she favor his suit, and we would spend another summer together, in travelling through the romantic region of the lakes ; and after that, if we felt that our inclinations increased in strength, I would marry him !

He smiled at the strange indefinite arrangement, so little suited to his views.

"I will go with you to Bouverie," he said, "and learn my fate at once. I should be ill at ease under such probation."

I turned pale at the very thought. "This cannot be," I said. "No one goes to Bouverie—no stranger is admitted there ; my grandmother is a recluse ; I thought Dr. Quintil might have told you this."

"I have never heard it spoken of before," he answered gravely ; "but of course I must respect this peculiarity, and meet you elsewhere. My ship sails in September ; let it be before then !"

"No," I said ; "I want to know my feelings better before I make you a single promise. I heard you say that you were coming to Montreal next summer—that your cruise would be over by that time. I will meet you at Niagara in July—if, if my feelings impel me to do so—and if you write to me that you will be there."

"Lilian ! Miss de Courcy ! This is very hard."

"Mr. Howe, you do not sufficiently consider my extreme youth, and the abruptness of this proceeding !"

"I feel that I have been precipitate," he said ; "it would have been wiser to have deferred this avowal of my feelings—a better mode, I know, of enlisting yours, according to the received notions of men of the world." He spoke with some asperity.



"Not so," I rejoined. "Mine is not a nature to undervalue frankness and impulse, or to be won by procrastination or finesse ! I abhor these things—I admire your straightforward and manly course ; but I cannot respond to you now as fully as I could wish. I am sure you would not respect me," I added, "if I were to deceive you in so important a matter. I must love the man I marry with all my heart, or I shall feel that I am a hypocrite indeed ! I must prove myself first !"

And with this vague understanding he was fain to be satisfied for the time.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HAD I known more of the customs of the world, or even reflected abstractly on the rights of others, I should have smiled at the absurdity of the compact I sought to make with Everard Howe. My mind had been so thoroughly imbued, by means of books, and the few gentlemen I had seen, with notions of high-bred courtesy and chivalry, as being the due only of woman from man, that I did not properly estimate the nature of the sacrifice I demanded.

I did not consider myself engaged to Everard Howe, by any means ; and yet I frankly confess I did consider that he was engaged to me ! Nor until it was pointed out to me, did the injustice, the inequality of our position, strike me. Weeks elapsed before time or opportunity occurred to make the communication I had intended for her from the first, to my grandmother. New and engrossing occupations filled my existence on my return to Bouverie, that shut out all such considerations, and enlarged my sphere of action and feeling for a time up to the greatest capacity of my nature.

From the first moment that my eyes fell upon her face, I perceived the inroads of deep and unusual suffering in my grandmother's expressive and flexible physiognomy, so readily altered by muscular depression as to scarcely present the same contour even in joy and grief.

"Have you been sick, dear grandmother?" I asked ; "or have you fretted over our absence? I find you altered for the worse?"

"Neither, Lilian—my health is as usual ; and I have gone forth with you, as if in presence, in all your enjoyment so vividly set forth in your letters."

"What then?" I faltered, before I remembered how she shrank from questions of all sorts almost with nervous repugnance. She waived a reply, by changing the theme to my own improved appearance, though sunburnt cheeks. But Dr. Quintilian, fixing his calm eyes on her face, seemed to read her secret in a moment.

"He is ill," I heard him murmur, at a moment when he supposed my attention diverted. "You have been watching! Why did you not write and recall me?"

The lips moved, but I did not hear her answer. In another moment, as if by tacit consent, they left the room together, and it was long before they returned. The evening meal united us : it was eaten in silence—travel having sharpened the appetite of two of the party to the exclusion of conversation probably. But, I noticed that my grandmother swallowed only a cup of tea, and her pallor and depression were even more evident than at first.

We retired early—on my part, not more to recover from the fatigue of travel, than to break up the gloomy restraint that rested over us all. To the very last moment, impelled by my anxiety for her, I hovered around my grandmother, trying to summon courage to ask her what ailed her, and how I could serve her ; but I dared not venture ! I dreaded that "stone in the flower-bed," that I had stumbled over so often when I first came to Bouverie. Inquiry was the one thing she could not endure, as I have elsewhere said. Beneath the voice of the catechist, her nature closed up in a moment, as the mimosa does at the touch of the finger.

What she wished to communicate she made known frankly,

freely. What remained was for no human ear or eye, and her heart shut over its reserved contents like the lid of a cistern. To me, in turn, to be repelled, was the one unendurable, inexpiable offence ; so that we compromised very well on these points, and went each her way in quietness.

I slept that night the sound, dreamless sleep of strength overcome by fatigue. Hours of such slumber must have passed, before I heard my grandmother's voice calling me repeatedly, and at last aroused myself from half-consciousness, to understand and obey her summons.

"Lilian, Lilian !—I need you !" she said, in low, sorrowful accents—at least these were the first words I caught distinctly, as I opened my eyes and looked straight into her face. The earliest crimson rays of morning streamed through the open blind, thrown back by her hand, and she stood pale and exhausted before me.

"Lilian, the time has come to prove you. Can you be patient, watchful, and discreet ? Rouse up, my child, to the call of a great duty !"

I sat up in my bed, and listened earnestly to her words, merely bowing my head, as she spoke, to signify attention ; she understood me, and continued.

"He that you know of is ill ! His life hangs on a thread ; and I am worn with the unceasing vigils of weeks. Bianca and Fabius, too, have withdrawn, entirely overcome. I dare summon no other assistance. Everything now devolves on me—will you share my task ? Can I depend on you to carry out my directions, while I rest for a few hours ?"

Again I bowed silently—I could not speak ; I felt a mighty thrill of emotion pass through my whole frame, as men may feel who love battle, on the eve of some great engagement ; or, per-

haps, as one may feel, about to behold the spirit of the unseen dead, by some magician's aid.

The power and awe of my sensations uplifted and strengthened me, and I made my arrangements to carry out my grandmother's wishes with coolness and expedition both. Yet I neglected no requisition of my toilet, and I remember—so strongly does the common place rule *us*, even in our most excited moments, when to be useful is our motive—that I chose, with some deliberation, a white cambric wrapper from my wardrobe, as the suitable garb of a watcher, and one most pleasant to the eye of the patient.

We passed through the door of her chamber—that mysterious door, closed until now to me—and, ascending the spiral stairs, now flooded with sunbeams from the sky-light, soon found ourselves in the sealed apartment of Bouverie.

The room we entered now from the circular hall, was not that in which the group had been seated that I had watched with such mingled sensations on the occasion of my secret visit. It lay on the other side of the rotunda, and corresponded in position with the drawing-room beneath.

The closed Venetian shutters made an everlasting twilight in this chamber, save when a stream of light from the central hall came through the casually opened door ; but the sashes were thrown up, and the warm, soft August air crept freely through the apartment from the two great opposing windows.

Through a crevice in one of the nailed up jalousies a branch of the jasmin that covered the mansion's front had forced its way, and, loaded with pale and odorous flowers, trailed to the floor. It seemed a hand of nature thrust through the prisoner's bars, to greet and encourage him who might never more see the mighty *mother face to face*.

In the centre of the room stood a ponderous rosewood bedstead, very dark from age, and shaped like a lengthened throne, and so placed as to give its inmate whatever advantage of light and air existed in that dusky atmosphere.

He lay on his snow-white bed, propped with pillows scarce paler than himself, that remarkable man, whose face seemed to have become familiar to me in one brief gaze of terror and mystery. He was sleeping when my grandmother led me to his couch, and with noiseless step and lifted finger impressed on me the necessity of silence—sleeping the tranquil sleep of illness merged into debility.

“Dr. Quintil pronounces this a saving slumber,” she whispered, “if not interrupted, yet if any observable change occurs during its continuance you must not hesitate to call him. He lies at present on the sofa in the opposite room, having watched all night ; observe our patient closely, Lilian ; I confide all to you !”

She withdrew, and I sat close by his side, watching a sleep that closely simulated that of death itself—so profound, so tranquil was it—and poring on his face, as though it were a book opened before me. An expression of tender repose (if I may so express it) lingered over the thin, straight features, almost transparent from disease.

The grey hair, singularly indicative of strength and vitality, and bearing unmistakable traces of its original color, lay loose and waving on the pillow. Long as it had seemed before, it had probably grown to an unusual length during his sickness, and now imparted an almost womanish character to his face and head.

His slender and elegantly formed hands were closed lightly on his breast, as those of the dead are often placed. A white napkin lay at his side folded, and glossy ; but streaked and dappled

with blood fresh from his bleeding lungs—a few Strombio roses were thrown carelessly by it, as if dropped from nerveless fingers.

Beside him on a small table was a flask of ice-water, a goblet of antique form, some grapes on a plateau of fine china, and a vial of pyramidal shape, filled with a liquid of such brilliant amber-color, that it seemed almost to diffuse rays of light around it.

During that long watch, my eyes became frequently riveted on this vial, and attracted by its lambent lustre, I raised it between them and the light, so as to scrutinize the contents. I saw with an almost fascinated interest what appeared to be a hair of gold, waving to and fro in the liquid like a miniature serpent. Now rising to the top in spiral lines as if trying to escape from its confinement—then collapsing in a ring to the bottom of the wide-based vial.

On the bottle a label was pasted, on which was inscribed in small, clear Italian characters, the "*elixir of gold*." This, then, was that marvellous remedy, of which I had recently heard, for the first time, with more of interest than faith I must confess! Here, then, was the realization of what had appeared to me but a mere fable!

A gentleman with whom we had met in travelling, a peculiar and striking person, whose name and mien indicated a foreign origin, had told Dr. Quintil a story in my presence, illustrative of the immediate efficacy of this medicine.

A child lay dying in a peasant's house, in which a horseman sought temporary refuge from the storm which raged without. Hope was over, and the death-struggle approached, the eyes were glazed and half-rolled back in their orbits—cold dew stood on

the clammy face, the power of speech, of deglutition itself was gone, when the stranger asked permission to pour a few drops from a small vial he drew from his bosom into the parted lips of the child. The request was granted, and at short intervals he was allowed to repeat the experiment.

The subtle drug seemed to insinuate itself into the system without the assistance of the epiglottis ; but, for a time, exerted little opposing influence against the power of the conqueror. He described the marvellous and sudden change that at last occurred—the returning hues of life, the renewed intelligence of the eye, the strength restored as if by magic. In an hour later the child sat up in bed and called for food, and the next day rose to its feet convalescent ! Such was the tale !

Something in the graphic manner of the narrator left the impression on my mind, that he himself was the benefactor thus referred to, and I smiled at the faith the empiric lent to the work of his own hands—doubting not for a moment, that the recovery he described had taken place from natural causes.

And now my incredulity seemed reasonably confirmed. Here was a dying man (he certainly seemed so to me) with this wondrous yet unavailing remedy in reach !

Yet what a radiantly beautiful fluid it was !

Had it been called “essence of sunshine,” it would not have surprised me, for inherent radiance it certainly seemed to contain. I had just time to set the vial down, which I had raised between my vision and the line of light that came through the slightly opened door, when he awoke, coughing violently, and fixed his glittering eyes full on my face.

Aroused by the shrill summons, or perhaps already watching for such a signal, Dr. Quintil came almost instantly to his assist-



ance, and sustained him in his arms ; at the same time whispering to me to withdraw from the chamber, and remain without while the paroxysm lasted.

Fabius had arranged my breakfast in the hall, on that great round table, from which books and papers were now cleared away, that stood beneath the skylight, and it was truly acceptable, for the day was on the tide, and I had not tasted food since the previous evening ; I was half famished ; yet I had hardly time to swallow a few hasty mouthfuls, and drink my coffee, when Dr. Quintil called me from within.

I returned greatly agitated. He was awake ; he would speak to me. He, my mother's father ! It was like the recognition of spirits in another world—ineffable, overpowering.

I advanced to the foot of the bed, and stood thrilled, yet mutely before him.

"Come nearer, my love," he said, extending one long, thin hand to me, that fell in the next instant almost lifeless beside him. "Nearer, that I may discern your features distinctly. Lilian, the child of Morna," he murmured, "the daughter of my child !"

"Even so, grandfather," I said, as solemnly as ever a devotee gave back "Amen" to prayer ; and kneeling, I bowed my head on his nerveless hand, and my nature took on her new allegiance.

The very sound of his voice—clear, sweet, slightly tremulous at times, infinitely pathetic in its quality—vibrated through my whole being, as no sound, whether of speech or music, had ever done before. I felt within me then the power, won from the electric shock of the clashing chains of kindred in our veins, perchance, to serve him faithfully from that hour with any sacrifice that he might see fit to demand, or that I might find it possible *to make*.

Yet, why was this? Others as nearly related to me had awakened no parallel enthusiasm in my soul. I have done wrong perhaps in thinking that it was the power of blood that stirred me thus. Was it not rather some fine magnetic influence totally independent of mere relationship, that rendered every faculty of my being as responsive to his will as the keys of the lute to the touch of the master player?

I know not how long I continued kneeling and praying silently beside him—if prayer might be called that almost unformed communing of my soul with God—more a mood than an utterance. He was now forbidden to speak; yet when I arose and stood beside him again, his beaming eye and smile were more eloquent than words. They seemed to say:

“Welcome, my love, to this solitary life of mine, art thou, as morning to the sleepless, or showers to the sere grass. Henceforth thy being shall be blended with my own, and the shadow that envelops me fall over thee also, even as from thy young existence, some light and joy shall gild the clouds of mine. For of this nature is the mighty and inscrutable bond of blood.”

Such, to my excited imagination, seemed the meaning, his mute but quivering features sought to convey; such the impression my mind received from their expression—never to leave it more.

Yet, again I question, why was this?

## CHAPTER IX.

DAYS wore on, during which the struggle between life and death continued in the worn frame of the sick man, until at last the grasp of the enemy relaxed, and the good genius was in the ascendant. The disease our patient had labored under was a nervous fever, complicated with pneumonia. Those only who have ministered to this malady, can know its tedious, wearing, ever-present requisitions.

During ten days of this protracted convalescence, my grandmother was confined to her bed by nervous debility, and I shared Dr. Quintil's duties by the bed-side of the sick man. Fabius and Bianca rendered him what menial assistance was required. But on me devolved, during a long period, the whole charge of soothing, and amusing his restless intellect into something like subjection to the necessities of his situation.

One of the most stringent conditions imposed on him, as a means of restoring his irritated lungs, was absolute silence ; and in order to induce him to preserve this, I was obliged to exercise every faculty I possessed, so as to anticipate his wants, and beguile his weary hours of convalescence with such stories as my memory and imagination furnished. In this way, and with no egotistical motive, I laid before him, picture after picture, the panorama of much of my past life, leaving out, however, almost instinctively, some things that I felt must have grated harshly on *his feelings*. Nor did I mention once the name of Jasper, bear-

ing in mind Dr. Quintil's admonition, and the evident wish or necessity that existed for keeping this father and son apart.

He listened to me with the most eager and pleased attention, and encouraged me to proceed often, when I would have desisted, by an authoritative nod of the head or wave of the hand, and the glance of his speaking eye.

It seemed to delight him especially, that I should in some sort have received the poet's vocation, which, among other matters, came out in the course of this one-sided conversation—if such a Hibernianism may be allowed. He almost compelled me to read to him some of those childish effusions which Jasper had admired, and which I cherished chiefly for his sake. He thought they possessed rare promise—alas ! a promise never fulfilled.

Thus, through the force of circumstances, I threw my nature more widely open to him, than I might otherwise have done in years, and felt drawn to him more closely by his dependence on my cares, than had his been the power to benefit me instead.

Almost the first words he spoke, when speech was again permitted to him, shaped a startling inquiry :

"Fabius," he said, as he put aside the delicate broth I had brought him one day, almost untasted, "before I eat another mouthful, tell me of Merodach. I have neglected him too long."

"He is well, my master," was the respectful reply of the man-machine so addressed, bending his head with the peculiar motion of an automaton, moved by internal mechanism ; "well, and well cared for, I may say."

"Ha ! I am glad of it, and might have known as much ; but where have you hidden him, Fabius—I did not think anything short of death could part us two. Has he forgotten me ?"

"I was obliged to shut him up in the laboratory when you

were so ill. He was so dissatisfied and troublesome, walking around your bed night and day ; and, at first, he would not eat—like you, sir, now—but he has grown quite contented again.”

This intelligence seemed to please my grandfather. His eye twinkled, and he laughed silently. “The rascal !—I have spoiled him, I suppose—not eat, eh !” Then slowly finishing his soup, to the last drop, he said :

“I am a *new* man to-day, Lilian, and so I shall take up *old* duties. Paradoxical, eh !”

I smiled. “Reach me that lyre, child,” pointing, as he spoke, to the uncouth instrument hanging on the wall ; “and let me play for you.” I laughed, as I took it down, at the droll misnomer.

“Lyre, grandfather ?—this quaint thing a lyre ! Why, it is nothing like the pictures I have seen of the Grecian lyre—more like a ‘tum-tum,’ I think, or a banjo even !”

“Give it to me, nevertheless ; it is a friend of mine—dear to me as the violin of Paganini that contained his father’s soul. I found it in a Russian prison, and it soothed me when I was chafing my life out like a caged tiger in the toils of Paulovitch ! I never thought I should grow musical, for I hate the art that veils sensuality under the guise of sentiment. But I was fain to reach down this old matter from the wall of my dungeon—where it hung as on the wall of this—and echo myself on its chords. The charm, after all, was in the result obtained from this exercise of taste and skill”—he laughed ironically—“rather than in the performance itself.

“Aladdin was never more surprised at the consequence of his accidental lamp-rubbing, than was I when I beheld the strange slave of the lyre glide forth, and obey its summons ! It stood *before me* in quiet expectation, evidently, of what it soon received.

I understood the case, and gave it food. Matters were reversed ; I, King Jehoiachim, being in prison, did give a daily ration to Evil Merodach, king of Babylon."

"How did you know his name, grandfather !" I asked, laughing ; "or why did you bestow it?"

"It was engraven on his card," he answered, seriously—"his card of introduction, you know !"

"His card, grandfather ! Then Merodach was not a dog, as I thought, but a man—a maniac, I suppose, hidden away in the gloom—some poor, half-crazed musician, perhaps."

"You will see—you will see, Lilian ! Apollo made his first lyre, they say, of just such a card as he offered me. Now, how do you like my music ? Your grandmother says one had as well try to play the flute on a tomahawk, as imitate King David on such an instrument as this ; but you shall judge."

And he struck a few wild chords on the imperfect lyre, as he chose to call it, on which he played without the least musical proficiency, certainly, yet with a certain graceful abandon. The tones elicited were the most thrilling and peculiar I had ever heard. The *Æolian harp*, perhaps, comes nearer than aught else to the low, long wail—for melody there was none—that rose and fell, as he threw his fingers over the uncertain strings.

He paused, stilling the sound by the pressure of his hand.

"Carry him to the hall, Fabius, and set him down there ; leave the door open, and I will see if he remembers his old clan-call still."

In a few moments Fabius entered, silently pointing back to the hall, to indicate the requested presence, and setting the door wide open as he entered.

My grandfather rose to a half-sitting position in his bed, as if

nerved to sudden strength, and struck, with all the force he possessed, a few rapid chords in quick succession ; then, after these had died away, threw out another group of notes, so to speak, with an interval of a few minutes between each cluster of chords, until my patience was well-nigh exhausted, and curiosity at its height. I rose eagerly to go into the hall.

"Be patient, Lilian, he is coming—I hear his dragging feet." His ear, made acute by illness, had heard what was perfectly inaudible to mine, listen as I might, and quick as was my own sense of hearing. Again he struck his instrument—of whatever it might be called—not of music, certainly—diablerie might be the proper term—turning upon the door his brilliant, expectant eye, with his lips half open, disclosing the gleam of the white teeth between them ; and looking, for the moment, more like an inspired bard than a man playing the child to cheat necessity. I thought irresistibly of that fine line of Dryden,

"When Jubal struck the chorded shell,"

as I gazed at him. Expectation was at its height with me, when a slight exclamation from his lips turned my attention to the door, on the threshold of which, and in the full glare of light thrown from the sky-light, appeared the uncouth, circular form of a small tortoise.

"Oh, grandfather, is this all?" and I clasped my hands in an ecstasy of disappointment.

"All, Lilian? why the wonder lies in that very word. Mero-dach is a prodigy—the prince of tortoises—a lineal descendant, perhaps, of that famous fellow that sustained the world on his back, according to Brahmin theology. Not quite large enough *for that*, you think, eh, Lilian?"

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Strangely enough, this very thought was passing through my mind in ridiculous appositeness at the moment.

"Wonderfully intelligent, though, as you shall see. Come hither, Evil, old fellow ; I am glad to see thee. Is the joy mutual, Evil ? King of Babylon, brother in captivity, how art thou ? Put up a claw, Merodach, and salute Jehoiachim !"

He leaned from the low bedstead, so as to let his hand drop on the floor, and the animal advanced briskly for one of its species toward him, with a sort of awkward mincing trot, unspeakably ludicrous ; then turning half on its side, it thrust out its reptile head, and reposed one flabby paw in the open palm of its master. I shuddered at its repulsive hideousness.

"He walks fast to-day," said Fabius ; "we are going to have rain—he is better than a barometer, Miss Lilian."

"Lift him up, Fabius ! Let him perform his war-dance, while he is in the humor, for Lilian's amusement. Here, place him here !" and, in accordance with the directions, he was deposited on the circular stand by the bed.

"Now, dance, Merodach, as David did before the ark ; and be thou more charitable than Micah, Lilian !"

Again, throwing his hand over his quaint instrument, my grandfather rang forth a few wailing chords, in obedience to which the tortoise commenced going through a series of the most absurd evolutions conceivable, alternately jerking and quivering, pausing and proceeding.

When he was tired of this amusement his master regaled him with crumbs spread on the table, which he devoured eagerly.

"Look at his name now, Lilian," he said, directing my attention to the syllables *Ev. Mer.* distinctly engraved on his back ; "see there indisputable evidence of its truth !"



"It must have hurt him to do this, in spite of his tough shell," he continued ; " for he feels a drop of rain even on its surface ; see there !" and he sprinkled a few drops of water on his back from the glass beside him. " See how he shrinks and trembles, and draws in his head ! Yet his favorite resort is a tub of water, where he reigns like a wet Diogenes—strange paradox, eh ! Lillian—to revel in the bath, and shrink from rain ! He believes in baptism, not sprinkling, evidently !

"But you shall see him play parson !" And by some means the creature was made to understand the nature of the demand. For, rearing on its hind feet and shell, it stood half leaning forward for a moment, with its fore-paws extended, and reptile head thrust out, imitating as closely as possible the attitude of a preacher bestowing benediction.

"It is very droll, grandfather—how did you make him do it ? Do tell me !"

"By means of this !" he said, exhibiting a small tooth-pick, which he had held in the hollow of his hand, and which opened and shut with a spring.

"I touched him with the point in a sensitive place, between the shell, and it caused him to throw himself back, not from present pain, but past association."

"Grandfather ! did you have to torture him once, in order to teach him this trick ?"

"Ay, child, ay ! but what of it ? I do not hurt him now ; it only reminds him of the red hot steel. It is plain, he has memory."

"Oh, grandfather !" I sat down perfectly sick. "Never let him repeat that before me again ; I could not have believed !"——

"No preaching, my love, if you please ! Let the matter pass.

Fabius, take Merodach away ; close the door after you. Lillian, you had best retire ; I think I can go to sleep now."

I sat in the hall at my embroidery, under the cheerful skylight, across which a troop of doves swept occasionally, that roosted in a locust-grove near by—throwing their skimming shadows down upon the floor. An hour later I heard my name called by my patient, and went into the chamber again. He had risen and was sitting in his great chair, dressed in his velvet dressing-robe ; very pale, but refined and stately as a king of lineal descent.

He greeted me with his usual smile as I entered—the cloud had passed away that had risen for a moment between us.

"Lillian," he said, "I have been thinking about Merodach, and the way in which I came to name him, or rather to guess his name, since you went out. Perhaps you would like to hear it !"

"Certainly, grandfather, it would give me great pleasure ; that is, if the recital would not fatigue you too much."

"No, no, child, I must talk now ; the long pent-up stream must find its way to light, you know, at last—so listen : I had been reading the last chapter of 'Kings,' the book lay open on the table before me, when that queer lettering on the back of the tortoise first caught my eye, and I saw its significance at once. For the first time in my life I was a little superstitious, I confess."

"That was strange," I rejoined ; then added, after hesitation : "but after all not convincing ! How came the tortoise there ? To whom did it belong originally ?"

"To the last occupant of the prison—to him who owned the Bible and the lyre—he had fashioned it with his own hands to beguile his weary captivity. A man immured for many years to suit a tyrant's whim, and released at last by the great Emancipa-

tor. A Welchman, I believe, one Evan Meredith, such at least was the name written in the sacred volume he tacitly bequeathed to me, for I found it in prison."

"Grandfather, the beginning of each of those words corresponds so exactly with the characters on the back of the tortoise, that I cannot help thinking it was his master's name he carried about with him!"

"You are right," he said, after a pause; "this never occurred to me before—yet the flash of evidence is irresistible now, Fabius," and he turned to the attendant now standing behind his chair, "Did you ever think of this?"

"Always, my master!" was the sententious reply. "Why did you not speak, then, you man of mystery?"

"The name you chose pleased you, sir; what difference did it make?"

A grim smile played over my grandfather's face; the question was unanswerable.

"Let the name stand," he said at last—"the name I have given him. It is a good name, and he knows it now, and answers to the Babylonish incantation. Let it stand!"

"Grandfather, how did you bring Merodach away with you; and the old lyre, when you left the prison—escaped, I suppose?"

"No, child, no. When Paulovitch unclosed his hand, and let the bird fly, he sent after him all that he believed to be his property—the broken eggs that remained in the nest—a chest of clothes, some jewels and books, an uncouth lyre, and an uncouth tortoise! Such were the possessions of the prisoner. Great was his magnanimity, princely his liberality, as he could wring nothing from me, either by imprisonment or torture; he let me go to save *his* prison rations, and my effects followed me."

"Were you long in prison, grandfather?" I asked after a pause.

"Five years, my child—scarcely half as long as I have been in this."

"But what a difference. Here you are comfortable, surrounded by your family : there you were probably worse situated?"

"Yes, comparatively comfortless and desolate, as far as externals went. But, oh ! Lilian, hope was then an inhabitant of this heart, fluttering, like the dove in Noah's hand, eager to escape from the ark ; but now a callous serpent coils there instead, cold as ice, sluggish as death."

"Grandfather, what a picture !" A livid shadow seemed passing over his face. Fabius saw it, and quickly leaving the room, returned with the pyramidal vial I had seen on his table, and poured from its lips, drop by drop, a portion of its flashing fluid into a slender glass.

His master received it eagerly, drank it down, leaned back in his chair a moment ; then, recovering his energies, as if by magic, resumed the conversation, without reference to the agent of restoration employed, the weird mystery of which so deeply interested me.

"The sight of your fair young face, the sound of your fresh, true voice, with its sweet, throaty, thrushlike richness, have done more to revive me than all the care and remedies of more experienced nurses. These things were life-giving ; and, hear me, Lilian, save yourself, there is no live thing within those walls. All else are ghosts of the past. There is no vitality here—none, child, none !"

I thought of Jasper, his son ; but I had learned to suppress all mention of him in his presence, and yet the mystery of this

terrible necessity (if such it were) weighed on me like a pall, that sundered two lives, belonging so rightfully to one another, and shut away the sweetness and freshness of the son from the sorrow and stagnant morbidness of the father. -

What the rain is to the earth would Jasper be to him, I thought. Oh, what can have arisen between them? Why is my grandfather here? What means this immurement, this mystery? What is the shadow that broods so heavily, so inscrutably over this strange, sad, devoted household of Bouverie—this mournful hall of Vathek?

## CHAPTER X.

THE twentieth of September found health again an inmate of Bouverie ; yet on the morning of that day I missed my grandmother from her usual post at the breakfast board, and remarked the sombre shadow that rested on Dr. Quintil's face. In answer to my inquiries, he said :

"Mrs. Bouverie is not ill ; but you know, Lilian (you must have remarked it before, I think), that this day is a mournful anniversary with her."

I did indeed recall the fact, that at a corresponding period in every year, during my residence at Bouverie, retirement and silence had prevailed among its inmates. The recurrence of this day had been observed among them, it seemed to me, as penitents keep Ash Wednesday—with seclusion and self-sacrifice ; but the mystery of its sorrow still remained unexplained.

"Go, Lilian," he said, when our melancholy meal was concluded, "and see that your grandmother is cared for. This was Jasper's province once ; it now devolves on you."

I hesitated. It was inexpressibly painful for me to undertake this task. To intrude, unbidden, on her solitude ; to meet that calm, sorrowful, icy face, that had already been lifted before me, when at the sound of her passionate weeping I had been impelled to enter her apartment uncalled.

"I am not fit for such a mission, Dr. Quintil," I said. "I think I am singularly wanting in the power of expressing sympathy. I have no tenderness of manner."

"Passionate child!" he said, shaking his head slightly, as if musing on the estimate I had placed on my own powers. "How strangely you have mistaken your own vocation. I have known few persons with such capacity for affection. I confess it has made me tremble for your happiness sometimes."

"Yes, when the floodgates are fairly open, I grant you, and my feelings are vividly aroused. But, Dr. Quintil, forgive me—do not think me ungrateful—my grandmother has no longer the power to do this."

"Is it possible!" he said. "Are you resentful after all? Have I over-estimated your native generosity? Do you not love your grandmother?"

And he gazed at me with a sort of incredulous horror, as if this, with him, were the one unpardonable sin.

"Have I not been forbidden to do so?" I questioned in return, dropping my eyes beneath his long, sad gaze, and crimsoning to the temples. "Has she not enjoined me *not* to love her?"

"Aye, true, true. I had forgotten that silly escapade of yours, so long over now, founded on uncomprehended words of hers. Let that pass, Lilian; duty is in the path now, you will not put that aside?"

"Certainly not," I answered drily, "I will do whatever you desire—whatever you think best. But, if this be duty, why not go yourself?"

He smiled.

"I have no such privilege," he answered, sadly. "I am a mere outsider after all, governed by the proprieties, you know. If it were a case of physical ailment, if drug or knife were needed, I should be earliest on the scene of action; but in a case

like this, I have no business there. I hope you understand, my child, that it is from no selfish wish to save my own feelings, that I do not go at once to the chamber of affliction.

“Lillian, this sacred privilege is yours ; go, then, enter the room quietly, but firmly ; do what you can to dispel the gloom that lies like a dark pall to-day over that most sorrowful woman ; and persuade her out of herself, and the useless past, if this be possible.” He waved his hand, and, turning from me, sat down in a deep chair, and covered his brow and eyes with his hands. There was silence for a time, unbroken, save by the faint murmurings of his moving lips—moving and murmuring unconsciously. I knew that he was engaged in prayer.

With a sense of the sacred nature of his occupation, I arose and left him, and sought, as he had desired me to do, my grandmother’s chamber. After a moment’s delay with Bianca, I entered through my own, the connecting door of which I found unlocked.

She was lying on her bed, half-dressed in some loose wrapping-gown, dark, pale, motionless. The shutters were bowed, so as to exclude the beautiful autumn sun ; the fire of fagots, that she loved, had burned down to ashes on the hearth. The room was cold and dim, in striking contrast to all the warmth and glory without.

“What is the use of all this grief ?” was my harsh, unsympathizing thought, as I entered the shadowed chamber. “Why not cast it by, and go frankly forth, and strike hands with nature herself, the unfailing consoler ?”

I stood beside her bed. Her attitude was that of a calm sleeper ; but her large, dark eyes were open and fixed, staring on the wall, as if memory had painted there some ghastly picture invisible to all other vision. I clasped her hand—I called her



name ; yet, for some moments, she did not seem to regard my presence.

"Lilian, is it you?" she said at last. "Have you come to keep the birth-day of despair with me? If so, sit down among the ashes!" Her smile was bitter and unnatural.

"Job's comforters did this, grandmother," I replied ; "yet, after all, proved torturers alone. No, I will not sit down among the ashes ; it is you who must rise out of them. Put the ill thing away from you, and keep no more of its evil birth-days ! Throw off the sackcloth—you have worn it long enough." Such were my harsh and inconsiderate words.

"Lilian !" she paused, she turned, she raised herself on one supporting arm, and bent on me a gaze of surprised reproof.

"Lilian !" she continued, in accents of earnest, pathetic remonstrance, "you know not—you cannot know, how intimately this sorrow is interwoven with my very heart-strings. They must be cut loose, Lilian, before it can be severed from my being. On this day, ten years ago, my hand received the only full cup of joy God ever deigned to place within its grasp—dashed down at once, before it reached my lips, to lie in the dust forever ! Oh ! my child, look on me, not with that cold, astonished face, but with sympathy and affection, such as belong to you by nature ! Look on me, the most doomed, the most desolate, of all the daughters of men—would I could say of God, but he has withdrawn himself, he has rejected me ; my claims on him are unrecognized—mine is the curse of Saul !"

Again that accusation against her Maker ! I could not suppress a stifled cry—this thought, which I had once before heard from her lips, was singularly revolting to my nature. She mistook, perhaps, the cause of my emotion, for in another moment

she drew me closely to her breast, and held me there, while she murmured :

"Comfort me, then, as you only can comfort me, most dear, most beloved, of all living things, to me ! My daughter's child—dearer than Jasper's self !" This was the first time she had ever acknowledged her deep affection for me, and I was melted and overcome by her tenderness, almost as woman is stirred by the spoken love of man.

"Do you not know," she whispered, "the fate of all that I love ? Are you not afraid to be one of these ? Afraid of him who is my fate ?"

"Oh, grandmother," I remonstrated, catching remotely at her meaning, "why should I be afraid ? All are so good, so kind, so affectionate—he as well as others. Thank you, dear grandmother, that you permit me to love you at last."

"I have not said this," she said, withdrawing her arms from me, and shrinking back again amid her pillows ; "I have granted you no new permission—let the old order of things remain. It is better so, darling—it is best for all !"

She turned her face from me, and lay quite still with her eyes closed, for the space of half an hour ; and during that interval I moved quietly through the room, making such arrangements as I thought would please her—placing her chair and work-table by the hearth, on which I heaped fresh fagots from the box of pine wood near.

It was her fancy at certain seasons to burn this aromatic wood, and, to me, as well as to her, there certainly was something singularly reviving and cheering in the odor as well as the brilliant flame emitted by the freshly cut branches loaded with fir-cones. As the pleasant light flashed through the shadowed chamber, she

rose, and approached the hearth. I drew her down in her chair, and felt that her hands were icy cold.

"Heat is the universal comforter, grandmother, I believe," I said ; "suffering makes one so cold, whether mental or physical."

"I am a perfect fire-worshipper, I know," she said, half smiling ; "I can conceive of a cold hell."

"Dante, I believe, described such a place of torture ; but I am not certain—it is so long since I read the 'Inferno' and I have not seen it here."

"Did you read it in Scotland, Lilian?"

"Yes, grandmother. I read whatever our library contained, and fought the battle of the Greeks and Trojans—through the medium of a translation—when I was seven years old. I was in danger of becoming a member of the Pantheon church in those days, so implicitly did I believe in Homer's gods and goddesses. I am almost ashamed to tell you that I never saw a rainbow without looking to see Iris descending it, as a boy runs down a banister, bound on some message or other ; and as for Pan, after I read of him, I was afraid to go into the woods on his account. He answered the part of devil to me, so literal was my imagination."

"How strange—how original !" she said, leaning on her hand, and gazing on my face ; "how sad even ! Lilian, had you no companions?"

"None, except Grandmother De Courcy, and Réné, the greyhound. I never enjoyed Bridget's society. She was my nurse, you know, a cross, loud-spoken woman—and those dear books were meat and drink to me."

"Did your grandmother know how indiscriminately you read?"

"My teacher sometimes complained of this—our pastor also he was, Dr. Somers—who died just before she did, a very learned, but deaf, and somewhat disagreeable old man : I think I told you about him before. He sometimes complained of my desultory style of reading, but she took little heed, and answered only by desiring him to remove from her library whatever books he deemed objectionable, and lock them away, and thus save all further trouble. So he began by picking out the 'Arabian Nights,' and 'Moore's Melodies,' and 'Don Quixote,' and Mr Beckford's strange book, 'Vathek.' But I laughed him to scorn, for I had all these at my fingers' ends, and proved to him that I had, by the way of taunt ; and so the poor man, utterly bewildered by the extent of my ill-doing, desisted from his task, muttering as he did so, quite in Cardinal Wolsey style—'Heh, bairn ! had you served your teacher better, and the deil less, you would have been in a different condition now. But matters maun tak their course. It would require fire and steel to expurgate this library,' and so he wheeled off in a silent, puritanic rage."

"What a mournful life yours has been, Lilian ! Passed with the old, the harsh, the sorrowful, shut away from all glad and beautiful influences. How very unusual has been your fate !"

"You forget, grandmother, you forget," I said, bending my head before her, while the glow of feeling mounted to my brow, "I have known Jasper !"—as if in that word were contained all the light, the joy, the gladness, that other natures divide among a thousand objects. I remained mute after I had uttered it. She, too, sat gazing fondly, sadly on me, as though the name of him she loved so well had been fruitful to her of a train of tender recollections, and given rise to a host of sweet and bitter fancies.

A light tap at the door brought me to my feet. Bianca had brought, at my suggestion, a small tea waiter for her mistress, which I received from her hand, and placed on the stand by her side.

"She won't like it, Miss Lilian, she won't like it, believe me," whispered Bianca, as I received the tray. "'Tis a fast day with her, as I warned you, and no one ever ventured before."

With a nod and smile, I closed the door against further remonstrances and intrusion, and hastened to the fireside at once, with my burden—not noticed at first, for still she gazed forward as if on space, weaving perhaps her web of thought from that disastrous past, which invested that glorious autumn day with such peculiar gloom, and even sanctity of woe to her.

She turned suddenly at last, and glanced at the nicely appointed waiter, with evident displeasure.

"Who has taken this liberty?" she said with asperity. "What ill-timed intrusion is this?"

"Blame me, dear grandmother, for the whole. Bianca remonstrated (let me do her justice), but your physician must be obeyed."

I knelt on the stool beside her, and commenced preparing the beverage, as I knew she liked it best, weighing the sugar to a grain, dropping rather than pouring the yellow cream into the fragrant hyson, served in one of those shallow transparent cups, out of which she preferred to drink it.

"And now, dear grandmother, just one cup for the sake of your leech—Dr. Lilian de Courcy."

"I am relieved," she said, putting the cup aside. "I could not reconcile such treatment with what I know of Quintil."

"You will not refuse me, grandmother, this slight request—

this unimportant sacrifice. I would do so much more to gratify you."

I clasped her hand, I raised it to my lips, still pressing the extended cup on her acceptance.

"Wayward girl!" A half smile curled her lip. She did not seem to think the matter worth contention. She took the cup and drank its contents. I saw at once their beneficial effects, in the renewed lustre of her eye and color of her cheek, hitherto pale and dark.

As sunshine is to the earth, was this rich crimson to her aspect—lighting, revivifying, regenerating, beautifying the whole. Without, all was cold and grey like twilight. My heart leaped up to see the returning life-blood brought back by my means, lend new glory to the sweet, noble features I so admired; and, nerved by a sudden impulse, I spoke my thoughts, still grasping her hand.

"Oh, grandmother! you make an idol of your grief, and sacrifice to it. Is this right—is this just? Remember what Longfellow says—the writer you love: 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' You must live down this trouble."

She withdrew her hand. I saw that I had offended her, when I sought to soothe.

"Such words, Lilian, from your young, inexperienced lips, surprise me. Who has taught you this lesson? What preacher of commonplace? Pray choose a fitter text."

"My text is there, grandmother," I said rising before her, while my heart swelled high with its mixed emotions, difficult to describe, and, pointing to a spray of remontant roses in a glass on the mantel; "Nature supplies it, and the sermon is not hard to preach. Those flowers have succeeded the dead bloom of

the spring ; and the bush they grow on does not strike its sap to the ground, because its earliest blossoms died, but sends forth more, and renews itself, and so should the human heart, grandmother."

"Child, child !" she said, rising in her turn, and confronting me sternly, "it is too much. Your intrusion, your attentions, your suggestions even, I have borne with what patience I might, but when you presume to grapple with the horrors of my life, and judge, without knowing these, its capacity for endurance, you go too far. Were I to tell you," she continued, in a gloomy tone, dropping the excited manner in which she had hitherto spoken, and bending over the chair in which she had so lately been seated, "were I to tell you the nature of that sorrow, whose deep recurrence this day brings back to me, you would sink beneath the recital—you who have tried to measure your puny strength with mine. What comfort do you imagine the Virgin Mary found, on the anniversary of her holy son's crucifixion, so great as tears and solitude ? These things are precious to the afflicted, and must not be denied to them."

"Grandmother, I am grieved." I could say no more, but bursting into tears, turned to leave the room ; my hand was on the lock.

"Lilian," I heard her say, in a sobbing voice. I turned, her arms were open, she was standing on the hearth, gazing after me.

"Lilian, return and forgive me ; you must stay with me."

And so, through that long, bright day, I lingered beside her, in the shadow, speaking sometimes of things dear to her, of Jasper, of his proposed tour in Italy, and sojourn in Florence, and *his earnest* love of art, of his prolonged absence, of his glad and

certain return ; for I did not share her misgivings on the subject, and she found comfort in my superior confidence. And now, for the first time, the name of Everard Howe was spoken between us. Dr. Quintil had told her all he knew of our intercourse ; much more remained to be communicated, and, without any reservation on my part, this was done. She said but little, yet listened with earnest attention, which entirely beguiled her for a while from any thought of self, to every word I uttered, pressing my hands, from time to time, between her own, as if from some fullness of feeling that could find no relief in words.

When I had spoken of this matter, in all its details, a deep silence fell over us again, so heavy, so oppressive, that it seemed almost a mantle that one might feel, and wrap around one, and take shelter beneath.

It weighed my senses down. I slept ; and when I awakened, my head was lying on her bosom, and through the great open window the last crimson rays of the mild autumn evening poured into the chamber, reminding me, with a sensation of sweet relief, that the day set apart for sorrow was at an end.

“ I would not disturb you,” she said, “ you slept so sweetly, so profoundly ; and now go and join Dr. Quintil, at the tea-table. To-morrow, at breakfast, I will be there with you ; and, Lilian, hear me, this much you have achieved, I have kept this anniversary of blood for the last time, but no food to-night, no more society either. Go, dearest, I would be alone.”

I kissed her forehead, and withdrew. There were letters that night for all from Jasper—long, dear, delightful letters. The



evening passed away so pleasantly in their perusal, that I scarcely realized its flight ; but, even for the sake of such communication, I did not venture to disturb my grandmother's sacred repose again, and those directed to her remained unopened in Dr. Quintil's desk until morning.

### BOOK THIRD.

“I cannot love him  
Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble,  
Of great estate, of fresh and stainless youth,  
A gracious person, yet I cannot love him.”

SHAKESPEARE.

“May my fears,  
My filial fears be vain, and may the vaunts,  
And menace of this vengeful enemy  
Pass like the gust that roars and dies away  
In the distant trees.”

COLERIDGE.



## BOOK THIRD.

### CHAPTER I.

WHAT strange power exists in the human mind to put away unwelcome suspicion ! It would have been unnatural, impossible, for me to do otherwise than connect with the prisoner of Bouverie much of the sorrow that rested on its inmates ; and many of those mysterious allusions to which I no longer desired a clue. Something had occurred, I knew, so dark, so dreadful even, in its nature as to sever family ties—and to cut off from all communion with his fellow-men, that strangely attractive and gifted person whose whole safety lay in secrecy. But my mind refused to rise in evidence against him. I would not imagine his crime. I sought to ignore it altogether. Pity, admiration, respect, tender interest drew me toward him with irresistible force. Day by day he acquired fresh power over me. His voice, his manner, his brilliant though often erratic conversation ; his vast acquirements and power of setting these forth ; his uncomplaining meekness, as it seemed to me so strangely at variance with a spirit all fire, all impetuosity—the strain of deep pathos that ran through his systematic cheerfulness—and spread above all these like a princely mantle that dignity of courtesy that commands deference wherever it may be found. These attributes swayed and fascinated me beyond any opposing power that reason or expedience could have exercised.

I felt instinctively that my grandmother regarded this growing

influence with an unquiet heart, a feeling as far above jealousy as perfect disinterestedness could make it; and not from a wish to deceive, but to spare her feelings I concealed from her as much as possible the powerful sentiment with which my grandfather had inspired me.

My visits to him were frequently made alone. From a compassionate wish to enliven his solitude as much as possible, the inmates of Bouverie divided their visits, so as to fill as many hours as possible of the twelve assigned to occupation.

He had indeed expressed a wish to this effect, and my grandmother had in accordance with his desire, given me her duplicate key of the secret chamber, and placed no impediment in the way of our unrestrained intercourse. The invariable presence of Fabius on these occasions, mechanical as it was, proved no restraint to conversation, as that of any participating third party must have done. The slight deafness of the individual, predominating in one ear so as to cause a peculiarly stiff one-sided carriage of the head, as if always thrown back in an attitude of attention, and a habit of dozing, even while standing in readiness to attend on his master's orders—and which did not interfere in the least with his immediate attention to duties, waking as he did with a start and snap of the eyes that never failed to amuse me, even though so often repeated—these peculiarities rendered him one of the least oppressive witnesses to the communion of others that could have been secured or desired.

From the very first the old man had taken me singularly into favor, and his earnest wish had been, that I should be permitted to visit and minister to his master, for whom his admiration and affection were unbounded.

*But Mrs. Bouverie had so sternly impressed upon him the*

necessity of silence with regard to my presence in the household, and connected her commands with such assurances of deep displeasure, that he had been mute on the subject. Taciturn, and uncommunicative by nature, it was not difficult for him to keep a secret. Mystery seemed indeed his favorite atmosphere, as unquestioning fidelity was his peculiar attribute. Yet his satisfaction was unmistakable at the result of my acquaintance with his master. He surveyed with evident gratification that familiar yet not informal intercourse that existed between us, so in keeping with his own ideas of ceremonious dignity. He was never more pleased than when called upon to contribute to my amusement by assisting in those chemical experiments with which my grandfather helped to beguile the time, and my exclamations of wonder and delight were music to his ear. My interest in all that concerned my grandfather—my contributions of flowers, of fruits, of books, my fondness for the poor dull tortoise even (which I fed and fostered until it learned to know me) were all received by Fabius as personal attentions.

"Why not keep a dog or a bird instead of this poor earth-bound creature?" I said, one day to him. "Do you not think, Fabius, we might procure a pet that would please my grandfather better, cheer him more?"

He laid his fingers on his lips, a common gesture of his when he wished to be impressive. "Silence, secrecy, are the watch-words here, you know, Miss Lilian; a dog barks, a bird sings—such indiscretion might lead to discovery. Besides, my master never cared for pets—Merodach was a special Providence, you know, Miss Lilian, not to be rejected."

This was a longer speech than I had ever heard him make before. It seemed to have fatigued him—he closed his lips with

a snapping sound, and was inexorably silent thereafter for some time. How perfectly his nature dovetailed with Bianca's, who was a born chatter-box, controlled only by circumstances ! How refreshing to both must have been their conversation, carried on in true jug-handle style !

Communications being all confined to one side, and received and contained, on the other, even as the contents of a jug, once poured in, are held in its inscrutable depths ; yet, perhaps, after all, in the deep confidence of the conjugal chamber, the "jug," properly shaken, did at times gurgle forth a stream of its long withheld yet not less precious contents. I have reason to know, at least, that toward the last, Fabius did intrust to the ear of his spouse the hopes, the schemes, the stratagems, in which his master indulged, and in which he, poor faithful fellow ! was the mechanical abettor. How fatally unsuccessful, both to himself and to others, reader, you shall learn.

When my grandmother committed to my hands the duplicate key I have mentioned, she coupled with the trust certain conditions not difficult to be observed, and the reasonable nature of which were manifest at once. I was charged never to leave the door unlocked, even for a moment, nor the key in the lock, nor to suffer this to pass into any other hands on any pretence whatever.

Fabius still found his cautious way through the basement--- from every part of which Pat McCormick had been excluded on pain of condign punishment ; and Dr. Quintil accompanied my grandmother most frequently in her visits, or made use of her key when he went alone, which was seldom enough.

Their visits were made in the evening---mine in the day-time, in *the interval* of study or other occupation, and most frequently

with work in hand, which, my grandfather said, gave such a home-aspect to every woman. At night, I sat with Bianca in the dining-room, engaged most often in writing, or in the perusal of some favorite author, a species of occupation which was not only congenial to my tastes, but useful, as a positive defence against her garrulity.

I had long risen above the childish inclination to draw from my grandmother's servant what she herself withheld from me. It was now my turn to check all communications that might have opened before me that sealed volume of the past, so religiously closed from my eyes by those who loved me best, and were the fittest judges of my happiness.

So I waived away, as gently as I could, every approach on her part to subjects that I knew must be fraught, whenever opened, with exquisite pain to me ; nor did I lose either her affection or confidence by the course of conduct I pursued. Her tender nature clung to my rougher and harder one with strange tenacity, mingled with respect. The question of servitude, as connected with this feeling, was out of place under the peculiar circumstances that bound us together. I doubt whether the problem of position ever occurred to either of us as worthy of consideration. I was the hope of her heart. She had but one other. I was the only being, save Jasper, who bound her to the future. My very faults seemed to have endeared me to her. He was "perfect," she said ; "too perfect for this world." But, for me, she must ever watch and pray. Bishop Clare, my grandmother, Dr. Quintil—in this order she ranged the objects of her greatest earthly idolatry. For my grandfather she entertained sentiments of no ordinary aversion, even if mingled with habitual respect. She was antagonistic to him, evidently—naturally so, perhaps. She



groaned, when I coupled his name with tenderness or admiration ; and sometimes rolled her eyes and made a faint sign of the cross at its very sound, as if preparing for a defence against the assaults of the evil one. But beyond this she was not permitted to go, and she felt and yielded to this necessity tacitly, as was best for us both. Although I could not but perceive the unexpressed misgivings that my peculiar pleasure in my grandfather's society occasioned his wife, I still believe that she did, with some unexplained paradoxical condition of mind, rejoice that natural feelings had found their outlet between us.

It seemed that she had doubted this result in the first instance, having knowledge of his peculiarities ; and, probably, as much for this as other reasons, had concealed from him my presence in the household, until justice to both made revelation necessary. She had chosen for this announcement a time which she considered most favorable and auspicious. A time when tender care, on one hand, and absolute dependence, on the other—reversing the natural relations of strength and weakness that subsist originally between man and woman, parent and child—might merge all personal considerations into one deep, harmonious affection.

She had chosen well, as time and circumstances proved. Yet, having so decided, so acted, she had trembled for the consequences to me, fearing, that, with returning health, might recur some of those bitter whims and jealousies that had hitherto rendered every object of her affection, objectionable, often unendurable to him.

Perhaps my own impulsive devotion to him from the first, and the instinctive insight I had into the hearts of both, had much to do in determining and coloring our future intercourse. I was enabled thus, in justice to myself as to each of these beloved rela-

tions, to parry all investigations on the part of either, as to the precise nature of my feelings toward the other. Was it not a strange order of things that I, the centre in which their feelings concentrated, should have been forced, for self-protection almost, to a non-committal course, verging on duplicity, utterly foreign from my nature, my habits, or my true position.

There was something degrading, cruel, even, in such necessity. Yet I maintained it as the least of evils. I was like one who had gotten hold of a clew that should lead him through a labyrinth, determined to hold on to its friendly aid though it conducted him through dark, and devious, and suffocating passages, at first, offensive to soul and sense, and confident that at last, by such assistance, he should emerge to light and air.

I would not surrender either of these dear yet divided parents. My mother ! my father !—the only ones that remained to me ! Both so nobly beautiful, in their stately yet separate age !—both so gifted, so widely yet differently endowed !—both so unfortunate ! Both, it seemed to me, so good. Guilty ! no, I would not couple the word with either—I would put it away forever. What business was it of mine ? Was I their appointed judge ?—was it for me to usurp the divine prerogative ? Guilty ! Ha ! the sting was there at last ! I would trample it under foot ; I would cherish no serpent like this ; or, at most, I would pluck the venom from the fang, by duty, by submission. Yet there were times when the dark spirit triumphed—times, when lying in my quiet bed, suddenly, unexpectedly, imagination would present before me a list of horrors, soliciting me to choose my fate from them. For was not my fate and theirs indissolubly bound from the beginning in the warp and woof of the same mysterious destiny ! Could any act, human or divine, separate us now ? Oh !

then it was, my Creator, that the whole mystery and beauty of the great word "atonement" flashed in a blaze of glory over my soul ! The past was fixed and unalterable ; the future unchangeable, growing, as it does, from that adamantine past, as branch from tree, as fruit from flower, an implacable necessity of a consistent God.

What then remained ? Was there no hope ?—none for the offender ? Yes ! the greatest, the noblest, ever vouchsafed to finite creature by infinite power. The hope of renewal, pardon, peace, not evanescent, susceptible of change, as are all the institutions of this world ; but great, glorious, eternal, beyond decay !

So in my soul the germs of an early implanted religion grew and waxed strong from suffering. Had there been no atmosphere of sorrow about me—no pall-like mystery pressing forever on my bosom—no voiceless call for sympathy from those about me, ever ringing in the deeps of my spirit, I should have been hard, cold, strong, worldly, selfish, perhaps—that darkest of all evils, shutting out, as it does, sympathy, and self-sacrifice, and charity, the angels that in the guise of travellers abode all night in Abraham's tent—insensible to the claims of humanity or the voice of God.

My very intellect would have taken the marble type, for such was its natural inclination ; but the rock was smitten by the prophet's rod, and sweet and living waters gushed from its granite breast. Enough of this ! I linger on my way.

Like one who goes back to an old homestead long forsaken, in the company of a stranger, where every grassy stone invites him to rest, every tree to stand at gaze, every bubbling brook to drink, boy-fashion, from his hollowed hand, in memory of the past ; but who forgets, in his own acted reverie, that another, bound by no such power of association, pauses carelessly beside

him, or follows mechanically his erratic steps. Like this revisitor of the abode of early days, I linger on the pathway of the young life to which I am returning in spirit as I write, pausing on its motives, drinking from its memories, resting on its sorrows, forgetting, for a time, how in this self-indulgence I am wearying the patience of my companion. I am recalled to a sense of my inconsiderate egotism. Reader, let us proceed.

## CHAPTER II.

LETTERS from Jasper, describing minutely his mode of life, the gradual improvement in his limb and general strength, yet deploring the failure of every effort art could make, or science suggest, for the restoration of his power of speech, had recently arrived. I was not disappointed by this want of success, as my grandmother and Dr. Quintil seemed to be. I think I never realized the extent of this privation in his case as I should have done. Did not this very want make him more peculiarly our own?

Yet what a deficiency was here to a man of Jasper's genius, which might, from its fine sensibility, have taken the shape of eloquence, I think had the power of expression been given to him, too fine, too evanescent perhaps (wanting this) to transmit itself perfectly through the secondhand medium of the pen.

In the pulpit, in the rostrum, in the chair of the lecturer, how beautiful would his presence have been! How greatly would the luminous eyes, the expansive brow, the graceful gestures have aided the cause, whatever it might have been, he meant to advocate! How delicious would his intonation have been in correspondence, as must have been the case, with the sweetness of his character; how musical his sentences! I can imagine all this now; but then, as I have said, I did not realize the void left in his being by that extinguished power. Now, how greatly the absence of "words, words," as Hamlet called them in his half-mocking philosophy, had marred the purpose of his very life.

Jasper wrote to us of the pictures he was engaged upon, chiefly

of a suggestive character as these were. To those called "Endurance," and "Regret," I shall hereafter revert ; but my favorites among his later works were those exquisite and ethereal images called "Fancy," and "Ideality," for thus he divided into two distinct attributes, the mighty power men name imagination.

His "Dying Flora," and "Aurora Waking," came to us now as proofs of his genius and improvement in the executive department of his art ; the first, a frail, sweet shape, stretched on a bed of leaves, strewn with broken and faded blossoms. A leafless tree, a wintry sky, an unstrung lyre, a shivered hour-glass, a dead Cicala, were the suggestive features of this picture. The faint and shadowy face of the dying girl, half veiled with fleecy curls, was unspeakably beautiful. A tender smile lingered about the lips, and the fading eyes were fixed on the humming-bird she held in her hand, still fluttering with life. Was this intended as a suggestion of a better hope ? It pleased me inexpressibly to detect, after long scrutiny, a weeping Faun lurking in the shadow of an old stone altar, half hidden by trailing vines. His flute lay beside him. The whole attitude of the grotesque figure was one of pity and sorrow.

"Is it not a lovely thought, dear grandmother," I asked, "the spirit of the woods laments the death of flowers ? I like it better, too, for stealing out of the picture, as it were, like an afterthought, something created by one's own taste and feeling rather than the artist's pencil, one must gaze so long before it is perceived."

I looked at Dr. Quintil, his eyes were full of tears. Were they of bitterness for the void which even this gift so ill supplied ? Were they of gratified pride ? I know not, for uttering the careless words, "The boy has genius certainly," he turned



bevelty of the picture, you will see him standing day by day  
 for that boy has hold of his life-strings ; but it behooves  
 to be patient and self-contained to restrain your ambitious  
 stings, Lilian. And now listen to what I have to say to you.  
 A deep experience of life forbids me placing so high an estimate  
 His "these things, as you do in your unsophisticated freshness and  
 as proof of an faith in the efficiency of genius to cure all ills. There sits  
 ment of him at this moment, above stairs, as superior in natural power  
 of leaves, capacity to that poet, that painter of whom you have re-  
 trees, a winter me with something like vain glory in your words, as I  
 Cicero, were simplest clown. How fares it with him, Lilian ? Deserted  
 and shadowy the world, consigned to a living grave, deprived of the  
 was unspeakable of the meanest slave, he wears away his life in humili-  
 lips, and the in solitude. What avail him now those talents, those  
 in her hand, ons, that kingly intellect, that will of fire ? The  
 suggestion of w is on him and beneath it he must abide, and with  
 tect, after example before my eyes, it has come to pass, that I have  
 of an rned to appreciate no quality that is not simple, lowly, and  
 lay God-fearing ; I dread, I confess, the erratic tendency of that  
 one quality men call genius."

It was no time for argument, at any other I might have placed  
 a lance in rest against her ; but the sacredness of her grief, the  
 poignancy of her allusions, silenced me and extenuated her pre-  
 judices in my eyes. Was she the loser ? The reader shall judge.  
 I made haste to seek and recover a copy of verses I had left on  
 her table, designed for her eye of course ; but which she forfeited  
 now forever, in consideration of her estimate of my little light of  
 genius. Small portion enough of this, heaven knows they con-  
 tained, yet, in honor of the intention, and to preserve its in-  
 tegrity, I reclaim them now, yellow and faded by time from the



portfolio in which they have lain perdu so long, and insert them in this faithful transcript of the past. These lines had been written in the summer, during that period of bitter dejection on my grandmother's part, that succeeded our return from travel, when her whole nervous system seemed unstrung, and her long deep sighs, broke on my ear in every interval of sleep, during one restless night, when weary with my prolonged watch above-stairs, I vainly sought rest in my own chamber. I had not found courage then to offer them to her ; but I felt, after the scene between us on the day of her seclusion, that I might venture to lay them before her with no unreasonable hope that as a tribute to her own sorrow, and a specimen of my girlish verse, they might be graciously accepted.

The sentiments she had uttered, had altered my opinion. The lines had been written from deep, almost irrepressible feeling. I could not bear to have them slighted, or coldly received, and so, I laid them by in my portfolio and lost sight of them, and when other poems of mine, little better, perhaps, were given to the world, this was passed over and forgotten ; I redeem it now.

I claim for it no merit, it has not even that of being a link in the story—and may be considered as a bead only on the guard-chain, the dark sombre-twisted circle, that I am weaving (poorly enough, I fear) from the tangled skein of the past, and I give the reader my gracious permission, to read, or pass it by at will.

But I sternly enjoin him not to criticise the poet as presented in these pages, save in her prose, and again I beseech him to excuse whatever of peculiarity, inversion, or imperfection of structure, may be found in that prose, on the grounds that the writer is a poet ! The habit of cutting down, compelling into small *compass*, *pruning* and *repairing* which belongs of necessity

the poetic culture is almost fatal to the expansive energy of prose.

Reader, it is a strange rule that will not work both ways. I have proved, I think, that I am entitled to forbearance both as novelist and poet. The poem runs thus :

## D A Y.

Come! The dawn is cool and grey,  
And the shadows fleet away,  
Misty prophets of the day.

From the conflict of the night,  
Thou hast risen stern and white,  
As the victor from the fight.

Wrung in spirit—faint of limb,  
Weary of the wrestle din,  
With the unseen seraphim.

And the coming of the dawn,  
Shows the vanquished foe withdrawn,  
Night, thine enemy is gone!

Bathe thy brow, and bind thine hair;  
Fold thee in thy vestment fair—  
And come forth from thy despair!

Put aside those dreams of power,  
That controlled thy sleeping hour;  
And in waking make thee cower.

Put away those thoughts of pain,  
That involved thee in their chain,  
Through long hours, that would not wane.

Strengthened by that vague unrest—  
That sits hag-like on thy breast,  
Still triumphant, though unblessed!

Leave thy bitter sense of loss;  
Leave affection, proven dross,  
And with courage bear thy cross.

Spurn that madness—memory,  
In whose shadow strong hearts lie,  
Panting for the hour to die.

Crush that impotence, regret,  
In whose cankered core are met,  
All the ills that life beset.

When the soul is sick with strife;  
When the cup of tears is rife,  
We must live the larger life.

Come! I know thee true, and strong;  
Be no more the slave of wrong,  
Thou to nature dost belong.

And she calls thee, with that tongue  
Ever eloquent and young,  
As when life from chaos sprung.

From the conflict of the night,  
From the inner war and blight,  
Pass into the outer light.

Dimly, like a dying queen,  
Pillowed, fleecy clouds between,  
Doth the moon from heaven lean;

All the stars have shrunk away,  
Faithless ministers were they,  
Leaving her alone and grey,

With prophetic eye, forlorn,  
To foresee the coming morn,  
And the kingly heir, unborn.

Fresh as winds that sweep the sea,  
Blows the breath of morning free,  
Over hill, and vale, and lea.

And the crimson streaks that lie  
Low adown the eastern sky,  
Speak the dawning glory nigh.

Harken to the morning hymn,  
Breaking from the shadows dim  
Of each overhanging limb!

How the chorus wild and sweet,  
With exultant joy replete,  
Thrills us, to our very feet!

And like incense priests go swinging  
Through the aisles, sweet odors flinging,  
While the holy choir is singing,

Doth the mingled hedge-rose yield,  
To the breeze that sweeps the field,  
All the sweets that night had yielded;

Closely with her wand of might,  
Folding in each blossom bright—  
Separate impulse of delight.

Insect voices in the grass,  
Murmur, as our footsteps pass,  
And, like threads of woven glass,

Doth Arachne spread her snare,  
Wavering in the morning air,  
Gemm'd with diamond, dew-drops rare.

Gaze! this heritage is thine,—  
All this beauty fair and fine,—  
All this light and joy divine,

Are for thee, and of thy being,  
In thy soul, and for thy seeing—  
Thus ordained the All-decreeing.

Drink! the hand that pours for thee,  
This pure draught of ecstasy,  
Reaches from eternity.

Thou, the finite child of clay,  
In the sun's rejoicing ray,  
Dost receive thy pledge of day.

As I read over these verses to-day, the circumstances under which they were composed rise vividly before me. After that restless night to which I have referred, I had risen at earliest bird-call, and gone out, my heart full of the woes of others, into the morning twilight. The scene, as I have described it in the poem, appeared before me, even to the desolate waning moon.

I returned at sunrise, strengthened, refreshed, uplifted, by that brief communing with nature ; and, without an effort, nay, almost as a relief, and with scarce a correction, wrote the poem. And it is dear to me yet, with all its imperfections, for the vivid though momentary power it possesses, to transfigure me, to make me forget the sea of sorrow through which I have passed since then, and, for the time, believe I am still on the further shore.

I am sitting, as I write, by the great open window in the octagon chamber, at Bouverie. Across the emerald lawn, dotted with groups of shrubbery, and broken here and there with clumps of low-growing, flowering trees, all in profuse bloom at this season, the magnolia glaucus, with its broad pink blossoms, the

cucumber-tree, with its large white flowers, the laurel, with its exquisite cups, resembling the finest Sèvres porcelain, lined and dotted with vermilion, and ready for a fairy festival ; and here and there the intruding but not unwelcome elder, with its pannicles of pearl, fit for a royal bride ; and the coarser dogwood, wearing its scentless starlike mantle gallantly of creamy white, beneath which the May-apple camp is oftenest pitched, as if pigmy hosts were on the eve of battle. Across the velvet lawn, and between all these intervening objects, I look into the far, dim, oak forest. The tender green of spring rests on the trees that compose it, and the sunlight streams here and there—for the day is waning—through the long arcades formed by their stately stems, and roofed by their branches from the sun's vertical rays. The dark, grey trunks are bathed in golden glory, as I gaze, and seem, each one, a column of fire sustaining the nave of a mighty temple ; but no form of flying horseman is seen among the green alleys, clearly defined against the crimson sky beyond, as I have so often beheld it, returning toward the close of day to the beloved home, and the expectant hearth.

How silent everything is—how solitary ! The birds come tamely under the window as I sit. The quiet deceives them into confidence of their own dominion. How changed this mournful home of Bouverie ! No stately lady treads its chambers now with graceful and measured step, or reclines in the great cushioned chair, work or book in hand, or presides with gracious courtesy at hearth or board ! No occupant in those great upper chambers breaks their otherwise unsupportable dearth, with his brilliant yet mysterious presence. No white-haired priest of God comes from time to time, to cheer, to bless, to reanimate hearts faint and weary with doubt and despondency. Even the stately

servitor is gone—Poor Fabius ! The door opens, a form enters as if to remind me how much of the cherished past still remains to me. Doctor Quintilian is beside me, and in his mute presence my repining heart finds strength and consolation.

Reach me thy kind and compassionate hand, friend, guide, companion ; thou sole survivor, save the feeble woman who still clings to thee as her only earthly stay of all that beloved blood-bound household of Bouverie ; and let me read to thee through my bitter and blinding tears what I have written, so that I may go on with a lightened heart and lifted energies to the end of this story of Alchemy. Alchemy that stayed not in the laboratory of the philosopher and the dreamer ; but stretched its potent wand over wrung heart, and broken spirit, bringing light out of darkness, and encouragement out of despair. The alchemy of affection, the alchemy of faith, having power to allay anguish, and fortify irresolution, to gild the front of shame itself, and substitute the ivory sceptre of mercy for the iron rod of justice.

## CHAPTER III.

I HAD granted no permission to Everard Howe to write to me. Yet it did not greatly surprise me when Doctor Quintil handed me a letter in that unfamiliar character which I instantly divined, and soon ascertained to be that of our English acquaintance. It did surprise me, however, to note the recent date of this epistle, bearing no post-mark, and evidently addressed from some near point, and sent by private hand.

When I had finished its perusal, I turned an interrogative glance on Doctor Quintil. His eye was on me, my grandmother was not present, and he hastened to reply to my mute questioning.

"Everard Howe is at Croften," he said ; " his servant brought the letter, and waits for the reply."

"He asks permission to come to Bouverie, Dr. Quintil ; but mentions nothing of being at Croften. I regret his precipitation. What shall be done ?" I asked, distressed and confused by a course of conduct I had not for a moment dreamed he would adopt, after my positive prohibition.

"Your grandmother has decided to receive Mr. Howe, Lillian. He has written to her also, soliciting this privilege, and announcing himself as your suitor. She deems it her duty, under existing circumstances, to break through all preconceived resolutions, and grant an interview to the lover of her child."

"Lover !" The word stung me ; I started from it. "I am so sorry," I said, "that he is pressing this matter thus indelicately,



it seems to me, after what passed between us. I am not prepared"— I burst into tears, cutting short my own words. Doctor Quintil looked grave, distressed even.

"One thing or the other must be done this day," he said ; "honor, justice, demand this course ; either you reject Mr. Howe at once, or receive him at Bouverie."

He turned away without waiting for my answer, and left the room. When I looked up, for I had buried my face in my hands to think over events, my grandmother stood before me.

"Lilian," she said, smiling, and extending her hands to me ; "I congratulate you ! See what a noble letter the man that asks your hand has written to me ! Every line reveals a true and disinterested soul. The first use he makes of his prosperity is to lay it at your feet."

"Prosperity, grandmother ! Is Col. De Courcy dead ?"

"No ! Fortune has fallen to him in a much more sad and unexpected way. His uncle, a man in the prime of life and health, shortly to be married too (which renders it doubly painful as far as he is concerned) is dead from fever, contracted in the discharge of duty on his estate, among his tenantry—and Everard Howe inherits his fortune and his baronetcy. Lady Lilian, again I congratulate you." She stooped and kissed my brow—I leaned on her supporting bosom silent and overcome, and irresolute.

"What shall be done, Lilian ?" she said, at last. "He asks to come to Bouverie ; shall we not receive him ?"

"Oh, grandmother ! I do not know what to say. I am very grateful to Everard Howe for thinking of me at such a time, and yet I should so much have preferred the delay I proposed."

"A very one-sided and unjust proposition it was, Lilian. Reconsider it, my love. Reflect, that you ask what you would be

by no means willing to grant. A year of uncertainty to end, perhaps, in grievous disappointment. Mr. Howe is right. He demands to know his fate at once—he loves you, he offers you his hand, he is entitled to a definite answer. This is just. Let him come to Bouverie, and receive it here.”

I looked up, I saw that she was excited, and anxiously awaiting my reply.

“Let him come, grandmother, if you think it best. Perhaps, after all, you will not like Mr. Howe when you see him, and I shall be guided in this matter,” I said, firmly, “principally by your advice.”

She rose, she touched the bell, Bianca came, and was dispatched for Doctor Quintil.

“Lilian has decided to receive Sir Everard Howe,” she said ; “had you not better order a horse to be got ready to send by the returning messenger to Croften for him, while I write my note ?”

He looked well pleased ; “I will send Violet Fane,” he replied ; “her pace suits a young man better than Cedric’s steady, quiet gait, or perhaps being a sailor”——

“Not Violet Fane, Doctor Quintil, I interrupted ; do not send her. Cedric—or, or my pony would do as well. I think the mare is a little lame !”

“I saw her this morning, Lilian ; she has entirely gotten over her lameness.”

“Wild, then, from disuse ; not safe, perhaps ; do not send Violet Fane,” I urged.

“You tremble for the precious life and limb of Everard Howe, who, being a sailor, is naturally a poor equestrian. I understand you, Puss ; I will send Cedric.”

“Any other beast,” I murmured, with sick disgust ; “it

matters not to me ; any, except Jasper's horse ; not that, certainly."

No one heard these muttered words, I knew, yet I suppose there was something wild and strange in my manner, or my face, for I met my grandmother's compassionate eyes, when I looked up from my reverie. The closing door had warned me some minutes before of Doctor Quintil's departure.

"I see how it is, Lilian," she said, shaking her head gently. "You do not love Mr. Howe as he loves you, and your conscience is disquieted."

"Oh, grandmother ! not as I could have loved, do I love Mr. Howe, not as I could still love another—who must be nameless now."

"Hush, Lilian !" She was pale as she approached me, "not another word nor thought, if—if you honor me—yourself—all of us.

"My child ! my child ! Cast away forever the vexed, the unreal dream of passionate affection. It is but a name. Respect, esteem, attachment, mutual confidence ; these are the pillars of the sacred union betwixt man and woman, that sustain the temple unshaken to the end. Look at me," she proceeded, "alone, in my age, widowed, desolate, accustomed to misery until I hug it as my peculiar property, and almost learn to love it as my sole possession. Look at me and be warned !

"Had I married a man I loved moderately—for to such a one I was once plighted—I might have been happy now, surrounded by friends, affluent, powerful, respected. What remains of that idolatry which almost baffled reason, and which held me for so many years in bonds stricter than those of superstition itself ? Ashes, Lilian, ashes ! The fire has burned down, the very cinders are extinct—the cold, grey ashes are all that love has left."

"And yet, grandmother," I rejoined, "I see you devoted, with no common devotion, to all that remains to you of the past."

"Devoted! Aye, in one sense—one only—pity, duty; these are potent words with me; but where do you discern emotion?"

"Grandmother, I am so young!" I said, waiving a reply; "the world is all before me. Mr. Howe is my first acquaintance. When I go more into society, I shall meet with others"—I was pleading my own cause earnestly, when she cut me short.

"Lilian," she interrupted, "you cannot go into society, as other young girls go, with a mother's or sister's protection; nay, you cannot go at all, save by snatches, at watering-places and hotels, and casually in cities, you may find yourself occasionally, but never in a position to know, to judge men better than you have known and judged Everard Howe. Besides, Lilian, there is a cloud"—she buried her face in her hands for a moment. "Colonel De Courcy is very generous to overlook this," she said, looking up; "very disinterested to seek to draw you from beneath its shadow. I recognize his magnanimity, although he has extended so little personal courtesy to me. Let this pass, however, in the current of greater considerations. He is a proud man, and he values highly every drop of kindred blood. He desires the prosperity of all connected with him; and when he sent Everard Howe to make your acquaintance, and weigh your merits, and renew to you his own rejected proffer, it was with a view of concentrating in Taunton Tower all that was left of his almost extinguished race. He foresaw this youthful attachment. He hoped for a happy result. I honor Colonel De Courcy both as prophet and patriarch."

"Grandmother, it is you who are generous; you are willing to give me up—for that ocean between us will flow like eternity

almost—to secure my happiness, without a thought of your own. But, fortunately, Everard Howe is independent of his uncle now, and, if I marry him, I make one condition—he must consent to live here near you.”

“No, no, Lilian,” she said impetuously, “not for the world! Your husband’s country, kindred, fortunes, must be yours. Forget that you ever set foot on this soil—never speak of it. Banish the remembrance—it will prove fatal to your peace.”

“Grandmother, when I forget Bouverie, may God forget me!”

“I spoke too hastily,” she said, folding me in her arms. “I did not mean that you should forget Bouverie or its inmates. But keep the recollection to yourself. In England, among the proud, the cold, the gay—what need to speak of us? Such reference could only injure you, and cause investigation that must result in agony. Letters, messages, occasional visits on your part, will keep our memory green. Let it be thus; and now, dear child, retire to your own chamber—be composed, be firm, and in a few hours he will be here; and then you will choose your destiny, if such a thing be indeed permitted.”

As I turned to leave the room in obedience to her commands, I was arrested by her voice:

“Lilian,” she said, “do not forget, in any future or immediate conference, the oath that binds you; not even to your husband must be revealed the existence of our mystery, lest hearing, he might recoil from—not betray us—I do not fear that. Do not forget,” she continued, approaching me, “that you possessed yourself of this secret in the beginning, and that by every law of honor you are doubly bound to keep it. That it is not yours, but another’s, over which you have no control, and that it involves the lives of more than one.”

"I do hope," I made answer, "that I shall be strengthened to keep it through my whole life. For the present, I can assure you solemnly. For the future, I can only trust and pray."

"Enough," she said; "I can ask nothing more than such a determination, such an inclination; I know that heaven will strengthen you. Be patient, be discreet, be courageous, and accept," she added, as we parted on the threshold, "the goods the gods provide."

I think I see her still, as she spoke these words, her head turned toward me over her graceful shoulder; her lifted finger, her curling lip, her beaming eye, her flushing cheek, are still before me; and the tone of the pleasant, prophetic voice still rings in my ear.

I can scarcely realize, so vivid is their memory, that all these things are shadows now, and that never again, while earthly life remains to me, shall the expressive face appear to my vision, save in the mirror of the past.

Revolving that strange problem called existence, I can see nothing that points so surely to its future solution as the power that dwells in affection to survive its objects, else so cruel and bitter a mockery. In this capacity of our nature, we hold the clew of our future life, which blindly, patiently, we must cling to and follow, content, as Theseus was, to bide the time when we shall come into the presence of the Minotaur:

"They sin who tell us love can die.

With life, all other passions fly,

All others are but vanity.

In heaven ambition cannot dwell,

Nor avarice in the vaults of hell,

Earthly these passions of the earth,

They perish where they have their birth,

But love is indestructible."

I bless you, Southey, if only for these lines—comfort and strength go with them. Eternal peace be thine !

Beyond all thy splendid dreams of Indian story, thy grand heroic legends, thy pictures of land and wave, I hold these simple lines embalming a sentiment more dear to suffering humanity than any other reason or religion has to offer.

## CHAPTER IV.

WHEN I had completed my toilet, and taken needful refreshment, and surveyed myself with such satisfaction as circumstances would permit me to do in my Psyche glass, I went to the drawing-room, to await the coming of our expected guest.

I had put on a favorite dress of mine, blue silk with lace ruffles—just the color of my eyes, Bianca said—a Marie Louise blue, I think they called it, with black trimmings (these it seemed coincided with her comparison, too, as far as brows and lashes went). The whole harmonized well with my fair and clear complexion ; I had let down my curls and shaken them out, until the gold threads stood distinctly from the chestnut ; and though there was little beauty in my face, I thought I looked as well as it was possible for me to look on that occasion.

My grandmother praised me as I entered, and stood in the flashing firelight before her, until the crimson deepened in my cheek, and a new light came to my features. It was so rare a thing for her to offer compliment. Gazing on her silently in turn, I thought I had never seen her look so handsome as in that artistic light and shadow, formed by the glowing wood fire, and dressed in the well-preserved black velvet, with its rich trimmings of Mechlin lace, and pointed bodice, caught by a cameo clasp.

When at last Everard Howe arrived, and the additional light of lamps brought out her still remarkable beauty, I was indeed proud of, and pleased with the impression she evidently created on his mind. She received him with a cordial courtesy, so natural,



so frank, yet so refined, that it placed him instantly at ease. Yet I, who knew him well, saw that she was studying him even while she disarmed him by her manners and that she was content at last with the result of her apparently careless observation, but real scrutiny.

The conversation flowed in pleasant channels. Dr. Quintil led the way, with a playfulness and grace I had never remarked in him before ; and Everard Howe earned golden opinions from all by his cheerfulness, modesty, and unpretending good breeding.

He was placed in a trying situation certainly, but he made the best of it, and acquitted himself well ; and as the evening wore on, and I perceived the natural affinity that seemed to exist between him and the friends I revered, I felt more and more drawn to him, and more willing than before to trust my bark of life in his guiding hands.

Seated by his side, listening to his voice, meeting his clear and honest gaze, I had a sense of happiness that had long been a stranger to me. Peace seemed to come and nestle beside me. Confidence grew up, as if by magic, between us. There was but one thing wanting, and that would come in time—aye, that would come.

I will not linger on this visit. I do not like to revert to it even in memory. Whenever I have acted against my instincts, and for reason's sake alone, as I did then, I have lived to regret it. Everard Howe remained with us but one day and night, and when he went away he carried with him my plighted troth, to be redeemed at the altar in one year. But for the flashing ring on my finger, I should have thought it all a dream—the coming, the wooing, the betrothal, the departure. As it was, the whole matter bore very little reality to me ; yet the indelible scar remains.

A correspondence was agreed upon between us, irregular on my part it must needs be, he knew, for he was to go around the world in that interval of absence, and my letters must often miss their destination, while he moved steadily on.

At the termination of this cruise, he meant to resign his profession, long distasteful to him, and settle on his fine estate in the southern part of England. He painted its beauties to me with enthusiasm, he pictured his home as it would be shared by a beloved sister and idolized wife. A king upon his throne seemed no object of envy to his simple tastes, his quiet ambition, content with love and competence.

Politics, literature, fashion, what did he care for these? What for the opinion of the world, or the voice of society? He talked thus to me. We would live for each other, he said, and throw all else aside as unworthy of consideration, content with mediocrity.

Unconsciously, but deep within my soul, was raised an idol that his words first fully unveiled, destined, alas, like all other idols of my making, to be broken at the altar in the end, but new and firmly poised on its pedestal at that period. The love of fame was molded in my very being. I shivered at the voice of this Iconoclast. Then first I recoiled from the chasm that yawned between us, then first I felt that congeniality was better worth than affection itself.

Yet, as I have said, I respected, esteemed, admired him even, had felt for him in our close but brief intercourse, a growing attachment, that must, I believed, ripen ultimately into something more. Perhaps it was best for me, impulsive, erratic, as I often was, to be linked to a nature like his. I reasoned thus: had I not seen a fiery horse placed side by side with one of tamer char-

acter, so that the docile beast might chasten the ardor of the impetuous charger? Was not the experiment successful—satisfactory, they called it?

Was not this very creature now, driven in harness under heavy loads, having chafed down his original ardor, guided easily by the poor idiot Pat McCormick himself, broken-spirited, down-crested, hollow-eyed, mickering even for his coarse companion.

Child of genius—"veiled spirit of fire"—be thou man or woman, from such fate mayest thou be shielded even by the grave! There are lonely paths on earth, leading to lofty mountain heights, narrow and difficult of access, which thou mayest tread; choose thou these, rather than the broad beaten road, with thy coarser yoke-fellow.

Married not mated!—common expression of tragic significance! Oh, the long, long, weary way that such beings must travel! oh, the blank beginning! oh, the dreary end!

Why was there not another clause added to the litany, forming a sadder climax even than the "sudden death" from which men pray to be delivered? "From lightning and tempest," from blindness, madness, and unequal marriages—I would interpolate—"good Lord, deliver us!"

Everard Howe was gone! The chain was forged, and I was free no longer. Yet every link was gilt with hope, trust, expectancy. The dull rust of the iron was removed, but the weight remained. Nay, the very clank of the fetters resounded in my soul, and still I persuaded myself that I was happy!

\* Had I followed my inclinations, I should have communicated my new fortune to my grandfather at once. I believed that prospects such as mine seemed to be would cheer and gratify him, and that he would enter heartily into my hopes and plans for the

future—I gave him credit for at least thus much of disinterestedness. I felt, moreover, that, as the head of his household, he had a right to know the steps meditated by each member thereof, even if circumstances had taken from him the power of guiding or controlling them.

But my grandmother reasoned differently, and I was guided by her wishes.

“He will think only of the loss he must sustain in your society,” she said. “Long immurement is certainly a friend to selfishness. Isolation, even, favors this tendency, as I know in my own case. A man would be more than mortal, who, thrown on a desolate island by shipwreck, with a congenial companion, could see him depart with satisfaction, even though to return to home and happiness. I fear for the consequences of such a communication—especially now that your grandfather’s health and nervous system have both been so violently shaken by recent illness. It will not occasion him more pain to part with you when the time comes, than to anticipate the parting. At all events, Lillian, we shall defer the announcement of your marriage until spring, when I hope he may be strengthened to bear it better than now.” And thus it was determined.

## CHAPTER V.

It was about this time that Smith, the gardener, began his course of systematic imposition and persecution. I had before mentioned his distant position from the mansion, and the intervention of Pat McCormick as messenger and carrier between his cottage and Bouverie. Dr. Quintil and Jasper superintended, and even aided, in the dressing of the flower-plots around the house, rather than summon Smith ; and, under such supervision, Patrick had acquired considerable facility in the use of garden tools.

Perhaps undue care to prevent his presence about the lawn had first aroused Smith's suspicions ; or poor Pat himself might, in some unguarded moment, when the terror of his dame was forgotten, and his errand to the gardener's house was of a nature to detain him longer than usual, have dropped, and had drawn from him skillfully, bits of information, which, gathered up and put together, had furnished a clew to our dearly cherished secret.

The circumstance of occasional lights, as seen from the crevices of the jalousied windows, during my grandfather's illness, in rooms long supposed to be abandoned, and even cut off from the rest of the house—light only introduced on the sudden emergency of hemorrhage, when life itself was at stake, for before this our patient had been nursed in darkness—had confirmed the floating suspicions long entertained by Smith, and determined him to use such knowledge as he had obtained for his own pecuniary advantage.

*His* demand for advance of wages was made in the confident

tone of a man certain of not being refused ; and, at first, rather than hazard an explanation, or provoke his resentment, my grandmother complied with all of his requisitions.

Smith had lived fifteen years at Bouverie, and shown himself capable and diligent until lately. Habits of intemperance had recently enervated his physical powers, and rendered him averse to labor ; and, when remonstrated with on one or two occasions, he had exhibited a dogged insolence, that, but for circumstances, would have occasioned his immediate discharge. Mrs. Bouverie had preferred to forbear as long as possible, rather than introduce a stranger on her domain ; yet her mind was almost made up to discharge him, when fortune gave him the advantage, and turned the tables against her. She felt obliged now not only to keep him and his wife in her employ, worthless as both were fast becoming, but to suffer an insolence of demeanor that was both new and revolting, and which was alone held in check by her own dignity and the power of her presence.

Spoken impertinence Smith knew would be punished on the spot ; but all that manner and neglect of duty could do to annoy and irritate, was essayed in turn by this unprincipled pair. The remainder of our servants were compelled to secrecy not only by their interests and attachment for us, but by the power of their church, through Bishop Clare.

Smith and his wife were English Protestants, at war with the religion of Bouverie, as well as with American habits and institutions. It was a positive triumph to them, to possess the power to injure or annoy any citizen of the hated country, to which they had fled from poverty and contempt at home, and whose very abundance they resented now, as a reflection on their own early necessities.

They were of that class of foreigners, who bring the Ishmael spirit with them from abroad, and who never identify themselves with the land of their adoption, hoarding their earnings to the last cent, and hoping at some future time to amass enough, either by thrift or dishonesty, to return to their idolized country, and fawn at the feet that kicked them off in the beginning.

This Spaniel-like patriotism makes bad emigrants, and fills our polls with corruption, our homes with traitors. "I would be willing," said a noble Scot to me, who had cast his lot among us in the true spirit of love and brotherhood, "to lay down all political privileges of my own, could I see the raw foreigners excluded from the polls. No man has a right to a voice in a country who does not feel that it is his own."

And to how few of our emigrants does this feeling come, even with the sacred claims of home and hearth! The love of country is implanted in our very natures, no one would wish such holy instinct less, but fidelity to a new cause is no less noble than affection for an old.

How base would be that man, who, received in his fretful childhood into the arms of a tender foster-mother, because his own was hard or careless, or overburdened, would in his health and strength obey only the blind instincts of his nature, and return ingratitude for disinterested care! How similar is his case, who, emerging from the serfdom of Europe, grows free, and strong, and vigorous in this genial land, and yet refuses to uphold our best institutions, or to acknowledge his weighty obligations in the only way open to him. No wonder that the foreign vote jars so harshly on the sensitive American ear, or that the derision and censure of those who drain our life-blood is so bitter, so *insupportable*.

My grandfather had placed this gardener at Bouverie before his last visit to Europe, and he had done well during his absence.

The English name and lineage, and the peculiar manner of my grandfather, had made an impression on Smith, who cringed of course to the upper class of his own land, though recognizing no distinctions in America, save those which money established.

He had never suspected before now, as far as we knew, that my grandfather survived, nor had he uttered such a suspicion even yet. He was among the household on the day of the burial (false in one sense, true in another), which shut Erastus Bouverie away from the face of man forever ; and as a proof of his credulity on that occasion, Smith had shed tears, the only one who did so, since to all the rest present was known the secret of his concealment.

Dr. Moore had remarked this natural impulse to my grandmother at the time, as a proof that her caution had been effectual. She told this to me in connection with his own remarkable presence of mind and forethought on that trying emergency, without which my grandfather must have perished. He, her life-long physician, was the only person, except Bishop Clare, outside of Bouverie, who had ever had any insight into that mystery, to guard which she had devoted her life, and he had died without revealing it. Ten years had passed since my grandfather went into the shadow of those upper chambers, and she had been gradually encouraged to hope that his whole natural life might now be suffered to flow on in their deep tranquillity.

How startling was now the conviction that a reckless hand held a clew to her secret. How humiliating must the consequences be in any case, even if exposure were avoided !



Smith had told Bianca that he felt convinced there was some one hidden at Bouverie, and that his wife had seen the taper appear and disappear, as if gliding from room to room, through the Venetian shutters of the upper floor, more than once, during the month of August.

"It's a queer ghost that carries a candle," he had said in answer to her absurd attempts to convince him that the rooms were haunted—an attempt that only injured her cause. "I'm risking my own character to stay in any house where such concealment is practised ; for who knows but I shall be accused of conspiracy when everything comes out ? Who knows but the law may reach me yet ? This here mean American law, so different from ours ! There is only one way to cover the risk I'm running. Mrs. Bouverie understands that too well to gainsay any reasonable request of mine, though it cuts her comb considerably. Well, well ! pride will have a fall. Colonel Bouverie was a proof of that to begin with, and now comes her turn !"

"Her turn !" repeated Bianca. "Do you think, Master Smith, that she has waited thus long for her turn—she, a grand lady, born and bred ? Do you suppose she would be stowed away in a corner, if her heart was not broken long ago ? As if the likes of you and yours could cut the comb of Madame Bouverie, the splendoriest lady that ever was in Washington, and given up to be."

"Oh, that is your Spanish brag, Bianca ! Lord knows, she is quiet enough now—no visitors, even—and poor enough, if Bouverie be all she possesses, as they say it is. The truth is, I'm tired of the poor worn land ; tired of subsoiling, and trenching, and manuring. I have a wish to try my hand at a public in good old England again, and leave you damocrats (thus he pro-

nounced this word of many definitions) for there's never a born lady or gentleman among you."

"You are a poor judge of such articles, I take it," retorted Bianca, briskly. "In your own country a gentleman would not wipe his feet on you, or your squint-eyed wife either, and here, we have kept you at your distance, you and yours; yes, and we will continue to do so in spite of your threats and discoveries," she added, snapping her fingers spitefully at him as he turned away.

"And good reasons of your own you've had for it. I don't doubt," he retorted, with a low chuckle, as he stuffed his great hands in his pockets and walked away slowly, shaking his head menacingly from time to time, and muttering, as far as he could be seen or heard.

"Bianca, you were wrong to excite him thus," I remonstrated after she had recounted this whole scene to me, the end of which I had witnessed. "What would my grandmother think of your indiscretion? Reflect, this is no matter of pride or feeling now, but one of personal safety to him, to all of us."

"I hope I shall never lay eyes on his great half-acre freckled face again while I live," she passionately rejoined. "I have a natural disgust to him, as strong as death. I hate his small, green eyes, so dim and cold, and his large potato-nose, and his great gummy mouth, with its yellow fangs and doggish laugh, and his stiff red hair; and as for his wife, that squint of hers is a true sign of her own spirit, crooked and evil, and mean."

"Be pacified, Bianca; let them pass. Think only of the welfare of those you love, and injure by this over zeal."

"She to call me a 'plumped-out prune,' when my face swelled last week with the toothache! A hit at my dark com-

plexion, I suppose ! Better to be dark and smooth, than fair and rough-rinded as a nutmeg melon. I'll let her know I have always been a better favored woman than she could ever have dared to pretend to be !”

Not long after this conversation Smith was discovered accidentally by Doctor Quintil walking round the premises late at night, and warned, in spite of his pretext, something about the security of the sheep, or the propinquity of peddlers—that he would be dealt with harshly, should he appear again at irregular hours, inside of the inclosure, immediately around the mansion.

He was reminded that the sheep were in a distant pasture, the peddlers no concern of his, and that there were enough men within the walls of Bouverie to defend it without employing spies to reconnoitre. Doctor Quintil was relating this at the breakfast-table, in the presence of Fabius, when certain signs of distress from that taciturn individual denoted his desire to speak, a movement so unusual on his part, as always to excite both curiosity and respect.

There was immediate silence, and a general direction of eyes toward Fabius, who, speckless and upright in his white damask apron, and with his silver salver clasped closely to his side, unclosed his oracular lips, and spoke to this effect :

“I only wanted to say on this occasion, that Bouverie has been watched for two months, night and day, like a besieged fort. Smith is afraid some one will escape, and he has brought his wife's brother from Croften to stand guard, and help him spy.”

“Is it possible!” said Doctor Quintil, springing hastily up ;  
“I must put an end to this in the most summary way.”

“Quintil—not for the world !” My grandmother's distress would have arrested his movements, even had not her trembling hand been laid upon his arm. “The man drinks, the matter will

exhaust itself—he will get tired, forget, or come to a sense of his truest interest ! What would he gain by a disclosure ? Nothing but infamy and poverty ; now, he is well provided for without labor ; for I am paying his brother-in-law good wages to assist him, and Smith throws all the work on him. After all, this may be a mere notion on the part of Fabius,” she added, as the old man left the room silently, exhausted probably by his oratorical effort, or dissatisfied by her view of the subject. “ Silence and forbearance are best for us in any case.”

“ You are half right, madam, I believe,” he said, sitting down and resting his hands on his knees, “ but it is hard to bear such insolence. I have never in my life been so tempted to do violence as in this instance. The wretch ; the low, ungrateful, presumptuous foreigner.”

And in this word all reproach was concentrated, according to Dr. Quintil's mode of thinking. Here it was a crime, but under any circumstances, even the most favorable, a misfortune he conceived not to be born American.

He regarded Europe, or pretended to, as a theatre sustained for the peculiar amusement and edification of the people of the United States, the actors of which were greatly dependent on transatlantic applause or disapprobation, otherwise he considered monarchies as useless institutions, and, even admitting the amusement and interest their fluctuations occasioned in the American mind, matters that would not pay in the long run. “ People get weary of the melo-drama,” he would say. “ Attention slacks at last. Would not those French, Hungarians, Greeks, Poles, et cetera, do better to attend a little more to their agricultural and commercial interest, and think less of our diversion ?”

Dr. Quintil was one of those thorough humorists—not wits, he

had not the least pretension to anything half so subtile as wit, and the two scarce ever go together—in whose conversation it is almost impossible to separate earnestness and satire. His was not biting, keen, sarcastic irony, such as most usually passes by that title, but a pensive, affectionate, satiric mood, if such a thing can be, running through his whole nature, like the veins in Sienna marble.

In glancing back over these pages, I find that I have nowhere attempted a description of that Christian gentleman, Paul Silas Quintilian. Distinct as he is in my own mind, I have given at least but a shadowy impression of him, I fear, to those that followed my relations.

His character had no salient points on which I could seize to set forth its perfection. Nor do I possess the skill, I fear, to handle its harmonious details, so as to impress the whole as a picture on the minds of others.

I will endeavor, however, in another chapter, exclusively his own, to describe as closely as I can, what appeared to me his distinctive attributes

## CHAPTER VI.

At the time of which I write, Dr. Quintil, as we called him by way of abbreviation, was about forty years of age—seven or eight years younger than my more youthful-looking grandmother. He came of an ancient Dutch family, long settled and honorably known in Pennsylvania, and was connected by marriage, though very remotely, with the house of Bouverie. The name of Quintilian was not without distinction even in Holland, and among its old archives might be found an account of a graphic historian of the times, who bore it by royal permission, as a reward for his accurate translations of the works of the well-known Latin writer, so entitled, and in exchange for a less euphonious surname.

Whether this literary pedant were or were not the head of the family, I never distinctly ascertained, but from the peculiarity of the name, I have supposed such a beginning probable, and even reasonable.

Paul Quintilian had been, with his brother, the ward of Erastus Bouverie; and when his guardian married, the boy of eight or nine was brought home, to make a member of his family. Luther, the elder brother, was already pursuing his studies in Leyden, where afterward he married, and continued through a number of years to reside.

Paul had been motherless, even before his remembrance. His father he had never known, and he had gone from the indiffer-

ence of a selfish and distant relative, to the harsher indifference of school, where just in proportion as his mind enlarged his heart closed up. Yet it was only kept the fresher by its entire abnegation of those around him. Like some great cool cistern, reserved for summer use, not sullied and dried up as the exposed hearts of motherless children so often are, by disappointments and repelled affection.

He had no idea that such a necessity existed at all as tender attachment, and was content and self-supported in the placid beauty of his own nature, and the respect which, child as he was, his peculiar excellence commanded from others, when suddenly he was brought to the presence of the young, gay, beautiful girl his guardian had married, herself almost a child.

Solitary herself, as far as ties of blood were concerned, and married to an uncongenial though idolized husband, the boy seemed a precious gift to her, and she devoted herself to him from the first with all a sister's interest. Perhaps it had been better for his happiness, had his feelings responded less powerfully to her affection, or had this less sufficed to fill and satisfy his soul.

He sought no deeper sentiment than her constant, unwearying friendship afforded him. His mild and peaceful nature craved no excitement, and reposed gratefully on the consistency and energy of her character.

Yet it was not thus, it seemed to me, he should have contented himself—not on the hearthstone of another man his place should have been chosen. So that the shadow that darkened it, left his life also in sombre indistinctness.

He owed it to himself, to others, to stand forth in the world, and do his part.

As husband, father—how happy, how valuable his life had been ! As citizen, physician—how useful, how prosperous !

That calm, thoughtful mind, patient and law-abiding, so proud, so manly, yet so full of meek humility (for these things go oftenest together) those large faculties—that frank and natural manner—that perfect balance of thought and feeling—these attributes must have brought about their inevitable results, and Paul Quintilian have stood forth one of the pillars of any community with which he had linked his life, honored, confiding, loved !

How fared it now ? It cannot be said that his “ life was a failure ;” that mournful truth, so applicable to two-thirds of mankind, did not apply to him, because he had never attempted to make it a success, or to mold it at all separately.

He had simply merged his existence with all its surroundings into that of others. He had voluntarily sacrificed his identity.

It was too late to retrieve it now ! Its clear wine had mixed too thoroughly with our stagnant waters, ever to be separated again from the turbid element.

For him there was no change possible. His moderate means, which might, under other circumstances, have been the nucleus of fortune, remained intact ; but moderate still, of course, and were used chiefly as a resource for others. His talents were at a standstill. He had no power, living as he did, to increase the one or develop the other. He had even lost the wish for distinction which urged him to such honorable efforts in his youth, and looked back upon it now with melancholy derision as a boyish dream, a fallacy !

Yet no one could notice him closely, and not recognize in him many of the elements of success. Nature had gifted him



evidently with power to shine and persevere even with the foremost.

His face was a very fine one, regularly yet roughly hewn, as if from granite—a true Teutonic face, of the noblest type. But for the large, steady, grey eyes—luminous with a green light, that seemed to come from some foreign source, as when you follow a vertical sunbeam down into the calm sea-waters, you feel that it is in it, but not of it, and yet enjoy all the more the blended, softened radiance—but for these clear, yet melancholy orbs, his aspect might have been heavy, and even harsh in its serious expression. His smile was sweet, yet peculiar, with its lingering, almost ironical mournfulness. His teeth sound, but short, and shutting justly together, so as to throw slightly forward the lower jaw when in repose, a defect in any countenance.

His complexion was of an opaque fairness—his form ungraceful, yet not exactly stout, as the word goes, was slightly above the middle height; he carried himself carelessly, and beyond the necessities of a scrupulous cleanliness, paid little attention to the niceties of dress.

His hair was the only beauty he possessed, if, indeed, the word does not sink into insignificance when applied in any shape to such a man as he was—so far at least beyond its commonly received import.

Yet this man, so full of capacity, and taste, and feeling, had been but a spectator in life at the best, could never be even this again, shut away as he was from all outward influences now.

When, on one occasion, I asked in my girlish thirst for adventure, for his early history, with its young romance, its early aspirations, its inevitable love passages—he seemed puzzled and

amused at the very idea of being connected in my imagination with things like these.

He answered me in the words of Canning's poor knife-grinder :

" Story—Lord bless you, I have none to tell, sir !" and I gazed in surprise and pity on that anomaly to me, a man without a history.

Peter Schlemihl did not seem more unfortunate or peculiar, after he had lost his shadow, than did that home hero of ours, Doctor Paul Quintilian, when this prestige was destroyed.

Gentle and noble man, whose place is still by my hearthstone, sole companion of my otherwise desolate life-journey—known only to thy Maker in all the fullness of thy self-devotion, and greater in his sight, I well believe, that those that Fame heralds, and ambition rewards.—Father, guardian, friend, I cherish still the belief, that in the world to come, the world of peace and permanence, and compensation, the garment of humility that clothes thee here shall be transfigured into robes of princely splendor, and the shining crown of the martyr rest on thy loyal head forever.



## BOOK FOURTH.

"Some souls lose all things but their love of beauty—  
And by that love they are redeemable."

FESTUS (*Bailey*)

"A deep occult philosopher."

HUDIBRAS.

"Nay, let us gaze, even till the sense is full,  
Upon the rich creation."

BOWLER.



## BOOK FOURTH.

### CHAPTER I.

I NEED not say that no communication on the subject of Smith's threats and annoyances was made to my grandfather. It would have been cruel and useless to disturb his life with these matters, until prudence and necessity should make it advisable to remove him from the vicinity of danger ; for well we knew that until a crisis of this sort arrived, no representations of ours would induce him to leave Bouverie.

Persuasions had been employed to this effect, in the first instance, by Dr. Moore, by Bishop Clare, by my grandmother herself. A residence in Europe had been insisted on as the only safeguard against detection, but with a consistent yet unreasonable resolution, he had put the idea aside from the beginning, as one to which death itself was preferable, and clung to the deep immurement, which was the only alternative presented.

He had, up to the time of his imprisonment in Russia, been a man of active habits, mixing much in society, although never making himself a part of it ; gracious and gay and reserved at once, brilliant yet cold, courteous rather than genial, a man with whom no other man had ever been sufficiently at ease to lay his hand upon his arm, or say in introducing him, " this is my friend, Mr. Bouverie." He had no friends, save those of the stamp of mere admirers and partisans. He laid open his heart to no man ;

he asked no man's confidence. His very affections seem to have borne the upas power, of paralyzing and injuring the lives of those on whom they were conferred, for he required that every other feeling should be laid aside in the breasts of those he loved, save devotion to himself; and whosoever exacts this tribute—one that God even does not demand from his creatures—deserves to be considered a tyrant and soul-killer.

For a man of this subtle, dominant temperament, to whom intellectual intercourse, high converse, attrition of mind with mind, and the homage of men, had been necessary as food and air, how depressing must this isolation, this confinement have been! Yet he never complained of it, seldom manifested depression, busied himself constantly with the details of his chemical experiments, which, since the late arrangement of the laboratory above my chamber, he carried on more to his satisfaction than before, or with his writings, which he supposed would bring him posthumous fame, or with books, which he read with a rapidity that might literally be called "stereotyping with the eye," and enjoyed with an almost sensuous pleasure, as a greedy feeder seems to revel in his food.

Sermons, novels, poetry, history, essays, travels, memoirs, magazines, newspapers, nothing came amiss to him. Piles of books laid on his table would disappear, tossed under it as he read them successively, with a rapidity that baffles belief. "Clear away this rubbish, Fabius," he would say, "let me never see it again," and the books would be transferred to the library in the wing; for having once enjoyed them, he loathed the sight of them afterward, it seemed to me. It was only a few early favorites in literature that he ever perused more than once, or could bear to meet again. Among these were Shelley and

Coleridge, and the works of Walter Scott. For Shakspeare he never cared. Some prestige seemed to attach to these, and give them, in his mind, strange interest and significance. He called Shelley the Poet's Bible, for he insisted that the germ of all poetic thought, all texts of beauty that others have worked out, lay embalmed in his pages.

Yet the works he read so rapidly, clung to his memory with wonderful tenacity. His mind seemed, like the crucibles he used in his experiments, to retain the essence and reject the dross of all that it received. Exquisite arrangement! by which Nature signifies her master intellects, and assists that progress which is bearing us on to a sure yet far perfection!

With a quick insight into character—which has seemed to me in any case to be almost a sixth sense, yet which never arrives at the dignity of reasoning, being wholly instinctive, and as such, a part of physical rather than mental construction, I conceive—I saw the peculiarity of my grandfather's temperament at once. I saw that he was sensitive, exacting, devoted to his own, even in proportion as he was cold, careless, cruel perhaps to those he considered aliens. No bond of universal brotherhood had knit its silken links about his heart. Hooks of steel had grappled him to a few. Barriers of ice had divided him from the many. His mind was a rapid, rushing river, bearing all before it, all feeble obstructions of conscience, of justice, of humanity, for such he considered these.

Woe, woe for that mortal whose intellect outgrows his moral sense, until the one stands dwarfed in the growing shadow of the other. A being thus constituted is "no less a monster," some one has said, "than the big-headed child of the fair, or the weak-kneed giant of the circus." Saturn eating his own children is a



type of men of this stamp. Humanity recoils from them when once they unveil their remorseless egotism, their sublimated sophistry. Voltaire, Rousseau, Napoleon, Robespierre, were monsters of this class, scarcely less hideous to me than Caligula or Heliogabalus.

Yet how attractive until the Mokanna veil is lifted, is its glittering light; and the soft breathings of the voice beneath, and the graceful, sinuous motions of the draped and stately form it covers, are—oh, how mystic, how bewildering! It becomes a question here, how much of this is perishable, how much immortal. Can evil be perpetuated in accordance with our conception of a just, a purifying God! At what point does soul take issue with intellect? And if they be the same, then, then indeed is hell a necessity, not an invention of the alarmist or the melancholy fanatic.

But I cannot believe this, I dare not. I must grasp the conviction that our Creator has made nothing in vain, and that through time unmarked by years, in dim futurity, the erring spirit shall struggle on, through what agony, what obstacles it matters little, so that the final triumph be achieved, and the glorious essence, freed from all impurity, be ransomed, rescued, saved!

And looking upon immortality in this light, it must come to pass that all intellectual aids to our meaner passions must perish with them, and that a mere spark may emerge at last from all the brilliant fire of genius directed to unworthy ends. Those that build altars to circumstance or expediency, need not murmur if a whirlwind overthrows them, and scatters their offerings even in this life, much less must they expect to find their remembrance perpetuated in heaven as accepted sacrifice.

*I do not remember to have received any enjoyment so purely*

intellectual from the companionship of any other being as that of my grandfather afforded me, yet it never for one moment assumed a spiritual type (I separate these things) ; "earthly, and of the earth," was he even in his wonderful knowledge, his brilliant eloquence, his startling sophistry—logic, as he called it—his estimate of man and his Creator.

Had I been less securely poised in my religious convictions, in my poetic instincts, in my habitual reverence for duty, this companionship might have been fatal to my happiness. As it was, it only agitated new springs of thought, forced my mind into active use, and taught me self-defence, and even persuasive remonstrance, so that I felt myself strengthened and impelled to come out of my narrow limits, and set my lance in rest for truth and God !

He seemed half amused, half touched, by my earnest zeal. It was something new to him—this solemn enthusiasm on points the young so seldom care for, or insist upon. My very opposition to his views, and the way in which I set this forth, seemed to please him, and at first he took pains to draw me out, in a half mocking way. But, when he learned to love me better, this manner was laid aside, in a great degree, and he came to look with forbearance and respect on almost all of my opinions, however opposed to his own.

I have spoken before of the difficulty of my position with regard to my grand-parents ; of their strange vigilance, and even jealousy, of any preponderating ascendancy over me on the part of either ; and of the suspicious and capricious nature of my grandfather's feelings, as exhibited heretofore toward every one chosen as an object of affection by his wife. A conversation held between us on this subject, may have had its effect in lulling that bitter qualm of jealous distrust with which he watched every

growing partiality on her part, and as his heart warmed to me, every manifestation of preference on mine.

He was speaking of his lonely lot, rather lightly than seriously, one day, calling himself, as he often did, "King Jehoachim," and wondering whether any real "Evil Merodach" would ever come and take him out of prison. I could not bear that mocking, derisive way in which he treated, what I knew he really felt to be, a great calamity, and I said :

"At all events, grandfather, you have devoted friends, who share your captivity, and minister to your comfort."

"Devoted !" he repeated, throwing back his head with a scoffing laugh that ended in a groan ; "child, child, you see externals only. Who is devoted to me ? You dream !"

"My grandmother," I timidly rejoined ; "she is evidently devoted to you ; and Dr. Quintil even seems so, and"—I could not add what was in my heart ; I feared he might believe such expression of feeling a mere profession on my part ; so I hesitated, and he waited vainly for the rest, which the glance of his eye told me that he had surmised or anticipated.

"Lilian, you mean well, I know," he said ; "but you are out of your depth, my love, when you try to interpret the feelings of Camilla Bouverie toward any one—most of all toward me, her husband. Believe me, there is no viper that crawls under her old stone gate that she would not sooner cherish in her bosom. You have heard how, in old days, people set up idols of stone, and worshipped them, and laid before them sacrifices of blood, and treasure, and frankincense ! They were not more mad than I have been in my idolatry—not more unsuccessful ? She never loved me, though she thought she did, for truth is her element, after all—her native one, I mean. I terrified her from the first ;

she had not your capacity for understanding me, and allowing for my peculiarities—not your breadth of character, Lilian. She shrank from me long before she confessed it to herself; she shrinks from me openly now—you see that, Lilian, notwithstanding this most dutiful show of devotion; and her heart lies buried in a bloody grave!” He muttered the last words. “So do not speak to me again, my child, of such affection as finds its root in pity, and the past; but know that one of the darkest mysteries of feeling lies in this, that one may love, and get only loathing in return. Is not that a horrible condition of things, Lilian?”

He turned to me with startling quickness, as he asked the question, and grasped my arm. “But she loves you very tenderly, I suppose, and gives you many assurances of this, I doubt not?” He added, without waiting for my reply, “is it not so? Speak, Lilian, I have an earnest wish to know the exact state of things between you.”

“She has requested me, more than once, not to love her,” I replied, “assuring me that she had no love to give me in return.”

“And yet you do love her very dearly, I suppose, feeling that she cannot be sincere in making such a request?” He hesitated. “Her remarks have made no impression on your attachment for her? This is unshaken? How is it, Lilian?” He shook my arm slightly yet impatiently, still keeping his watchful, glittering eye upon my face.

“One does not usually give love without return,” I answered, while my heart smote me for my duplicity; but I did believe at the time that I had discovered his mania, and treated him accordingly. “My feelings toward my grandmother are very dutiful, but not such as you inspire me with, dear grandfather.”

He turned away well pleased, and yet in silence. I had spoken

the truth, yet I felt the whole falseness of my position, forced upon me, as it was, by circumstances. The spirit of equivocation and compromise were not mine by nature. It cost me dear to make such sacrifice of frankness and outspoken honesty as lay beneath those truthful words of mine.

"Can it be possible," he said, "that you come here in a frame of mind that permits you to love and honor me? Have they given you no coat of mail against my influence before sending you here, in the shape of pious warnings, exhortation, and all that sort of thing! Am I to understand you thus, Lillian? Speak—and speak the simple truth—as which have they represented me to you, madman or villain?"

"Neither, grandfather, I do assure you," I replied, looking him steadily in the eye. He believed me, evidently—he always believed me, for, with all his faults, he had confidence in the existence of truth as an abstract quality—a weakness, perhaps, peculiar to some organizations—even to his own.

"This is what they call, in Christian parlance, 'heaping red-hot coals on an enemy's head;' what a noble motive for forbearance, to be sure! That old St. Paul of theirs was an apt torturer; how well he knew the secret of revenge—better than an Indian squaw, eh, Lillian? His nature would come out, though, even in his sanctity. He could not forget the pleasure that early frolic of his afforded him, when he and some other Jewish boys went out and stoned St. Stephen to death, one fine morning."

"Oh, grandfather, he repented of that."

"Repented!" he echoed; "repented! as if such a thing could be!" He rose and walked the room, with a curling lip and downcast eyes. "I corze," said Jesus Christ, "to call not the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

The sacred declaration seemed to drop from him involuntarily.

"Comforting words are these, dear grandfather."

"Impossible words, Lilian, to some natures ; I, for one, am so constituted, that I cannot understand them. The past is irrecoverable—it cannot be wiped out."

"Atonement, grandfather, there is another grand holy word, most comforting, most merciful ; embracing all requisitions of the past and present, repentance even !"

"Yes, a very grand word, indeed, atonement ;" and he rolled it out like an organ. "Truly, it sounds well ! It is strange the French have no such word as that—characteristic though of their independent levity ! 'Expier !' it does not mean the same thing at all ; we have 'expiate,' to render that—a different sense entirely. A man may 'expiate' his offences by a term of imprisonment ; but he does not 'atone' for them thus. I agree with you, Lilian, you have good taste. It is a grand word."

"Oh, grandfather, it is not as a matter of taste, I regard the word. Think of the promise—think of Christ crucified."

He waved his hand and turned away in silence. When I looked at him again he was standing before his book-shelves, turning over the leaves of an illuminated Coleridge.

"Lilian," he said ; "I have tried vainly to analyze the nature of Quintil's feelings to me—poor Quintil ! he is a good fellow, a vase that runs over with generous wine ; but I hate unnatural sentiments even if directed to my own advantage, and there does seem to be a sort of moral obliquity about his feelings for me after all. I think I have caught a clew now—however, the merest thread though to the general warp—in these lines of Schiller, in his grand plays of the 'Piccolomini,' and 'Death of Wallenstein,' through his mouthpiece, the English Coleridge. Hear what he

says : These are the words of Max Piccolomini—you must read the translation, Lillian—to the great Duke Wallenstein. He loved him once ; but had lost faith in him now. And he read with his exquisite undertones, the following passages :

“ ‘ Oh, God of heavens, what a change is here !  
Beseems it me to offer such persuasion  
To thee, who, like the fixed star of the pole  
Wert all I gazed on, in life’s trackless ocean !  
Oh ! what a rent thou makest in my heart !  
The ingrained instinct of old reverence,  
The holy habit of obedience,  
Must I pluck *live* asunder from thy name.’ ”

As he gave the last line he grasped his breast as if he felt the plucking fingers of pain—then continued to read, after an interval, pacing the room slowly as he did so, still bearing the book lying open on the palm of his left hand, still pressing his right hand laid over his heart.

“ ‘ Nay, do not turn thy countenance upon me,  
It always was as a God looking on me,  
Duke Wallenstein. Its power has not departed,  
The senses still are in thy bonds, although,  
Bleeding, the soul hath freed herself.’ ”

“ ‘ Still more ! Alas ! alas, Lillian.’ He paused, and read with exquisite pathos, shaking his head slowly as he began—

“ ‘ Thou canst not end in this ! It would reduce  
All human creatures to disloyalty  
Against the nobleness of their own natures ;  
’Twill justify the vulgar misbelief,  
Which holdeth nothing noble in free will,  
And trusts itself to impotence alone,  
Made powerful only in an unseen power.’ ”

"That last line is very fine, Lilian," marking it with his long, lithe forefinger. "It contains the whole theory of fate—the addled theory! and it is in words like these that Paul Quintilian, had he the poetic faculty, instead of the enduring one, would address himself to me," shutting the book suddenly, "Erastus Bouverie."

I was quite silent, affected in spite of myself, though he made so light of it all; for he had laid the book aside, and was feeding Merodach when I cleared away the tears that dimmed my eyes, and surveyed him again.

"Ah, here comes Fabius with my dinner, doubly welcome to-day, since 'Evil' has dined so heartily. My appetite wakes with sympathy—'L'appetit vient en mangeant,' you know, Lilian; come, dine with me. Here are Fontainebleau grapes, and Vergalou pears."

"No, grandfather, they will expect me downstairs; another time, I will remain; farewell now, until to-morrow."

"Farewell, Lily, and hearken; when you come again put on the little blue dress with the lace ruffles. It suits my fancy and your style of face; and let your curls drop again. I do not like this severe-braided hair. Give me—

"Tresses unconfined,  
Woody by each Egean wind."

"There it goes again, Lilian. It is the curse of memory to be obliged to speak in other men's words half the time."

I laughed and left him.



## CHAPTER II.

DURING all this time, Bishop Clare had come and gone with periodical regularity, to and from Bouverie. He was of course our confidant in the matter of my engagement ; and if ever he recalled the strange intimations he had made to me with regard to Jasper's feelings, no evidence of such memory was given by any allusion or expression of his now.

There were times, indeed, when turning suddenly to him with my habitual impulse, I found his eyes fixed on me with a half-pitying, half-conjecturing gaze ; times, when something seemed to falter on his tongue, suppressed before uttered, and replaced by words of different signification. But to these symptoms of uneasiness on his part, I attached little consequence. I had long ceased to try to fathom the motives of those around me—long rested comfortably in the belief that all they did was for the best, and from unavoidable causes.

When Bishop Clare was at Bouverie, he spent much of his time alone with my grandfather. A strong personal attachment had existed between them, it seemed, although no two men ever evidenced less congeniality of sentiment. I do not remember to have been present at more than one or two of these interviews, and then it appeared to me that my grandfather was restrained and silent, and Bishop Clare excited and ill at ease. Between him and my grandmother existed a very different intercourse. Her whole nature seemed to wake up and open in his presence, as that of a plant in the reviving rays of the morning sun. She hung

upon his words, often commonplace enough, as if they had been saintly oracles. She anticipated his wants with all a daughter's forethought, and gave up every employment to amuse and entertain him. When he left her house she would follow his retreating form with streaming eyes, and sink, for days after, into cold, listless apathy.

He was, indeed, as she had said, the link that bound her to the outward as well as the spiritual world. The memories, the affections, of a whole life were centred in him, as relics of the dead are laid away in a precious casket. Dr. Quintil, with all his calm good sense and life-long devotion, had not half the influence over her that belonged to Bishop Clare.

I know not how it was, that, much as I revered and even loved him, our holy father acquired no such dominion over me. It must have been my instinctive shrinking from the commonplace that governed me in this matter—an impatience of the matter-of-fact in all its phases. There was a chord in my nature that vibrated to whatever was peculiar, romantic, erratic even, in others; there was a void to be filled only by the ideal, the chivalric, the half revealed. There was another feeling very strong with me, hereditary, perhaps—I valued no divided affection. Bishop Clare was not fastidious enough; he placed every one he loved too much on the same platform; and did he not—for it was his vocation—love all the world? I imagined him going into Irish hovels, with nearly the same words of praise or blame, encouragement or affection, he spoke to us. But that man in the sealed solitude above had no other source of delight than I afforded him. Deeper love, stronger friendship, he might once have known than he felt for or received from me; “but the trail of the serpent was over them all.” My unaffected devotion to him, my very ignorance of the

past, the freshness of our acquaintance, even, kept our affection green, for I was to him as a young shoot putting out from some old root, the decayed remnant of a noble tree, thus unexpectedly sending up a scion to be watched and tended again, and to flourish luxuriantly over the mournful wreck of the past.

Although restored to comparative health, my grandfather's condition was a precarious one, through the autumn and winter of a year whose severity of cold has never been surpassed in the region in which we dwelt. During two months of this most rigorous season, he never left the rooms set apart for his winter use, consisting simply of a chamber—that in which I had first seen him—and the small laboratory whose roaring furnace over my head had confirmed my suspicions of a hidden inmate.

He did not even venture, so sensitive to cold had his frame become during this period, to emerge into the circular hall, even for the advantage of exercise and light. There was no way of warming this apartment, the size and roofing of which rendered it intensely cold ; and he basked in the glare of the great coal-fire within and the artificial lights he burned, by the brilliancy and number of which he tried to console himself for the absence of the sun.

In order to enjoy these luxuries with security, it was necessary to close the windows almost hermetically, by means of thick shutters placed inside of the sashes, protected without, as these were, only by the jalousies that shielded all the casements. We have seen how a ray of light, shining through the crevices of these Venetian blinds, during his illness, had subjected my grandmother to suspicion and persecution even—for in the summer, when his closely-sealed apartment became unendurable to him, and he passed into another, our prisoner was compelled to dispense alto-

gether with artificial light, and pass the short nights in darkness. In winter he was as completely shut away from the external world in that closely sealed room of his, as the sailors in the hold of a ship are shielded, when the dead lights are down, from the raging storms without.

The constant fire in his grate, excited, however, no attention as that in the dining-room below was never extinguished wholly, and the same chimney carried off the smoke from either flue. The furnace in the laboratory was connected also with this by means of slender pipes contrived by Dr. Quintil.

I think I have sufficiently shown that the comfort as well as safety of our captive had been scrupulously consulted, as far at least as these could be connected. His tastes, his pleasures were equally considered.

His room was surrounded with cabinets of minerals, shells, coins, and medallions cast from outlines of celebrated statues, and bas-relievs. The rotunda was literally lined with fine engravings, among which appeared, here and there, exquisite paintings, like jewels sparkling on a setting of plain gold. His writing-table was heaped with the volumed literature of the day, regularly renewed, although consumed (such literally was the expression that suited best his style of reading), with such remorseless rapidity. Folios of architectural, geological, botanical, anatomical prints, were piled on *étagères*. Magazines and newspapers were brought in, too, for his use, by every mail; yet had it depended on him, none of these suggestive influences would have surrounded his lonely lot, much as he enjoyed them.

His income, cut down now to his original patrimony, that derived from *Ursa*, or Usher Bouverie—once large from his own exertions—and passing through the hands of his wife into his own (since

in the eyes of the world he had no existence), flowed into far different channels. One thousand guineas a year still came to him from English funds with unfailing regularity, paid in gold, as it was for its intrinsic value only that he esteemed the money he used for such peculiar purposes. In the preparation of his costly medicine, and the prosecution of his chemical experiments, he consumed every grain of this, yet found it all too little to develop the mighty purpose that inspired his stagnant life. He had conceived a project of which he never lost sight for one moment of his conscious existence, and in the development of which he rested his whole earthly aspiration. He believed in the entire possibility of effecting this great object of his life, and had proved this confidence by daring the anger of Nicholas of Russia, rather than acknowledge himself incompetent to carry out his idolized scheme. It was his belief that he possessed this power, that enabled him to bear so patiently his inactive and monotonous life. What was the past, what was imprisonment, what was remorse itself to one who looked to a future so splendid as to gild a whole existence, however dark, as the dawning glory of the morning dispels the shadows and chilliness of night?

"Why, Lilian," he would say, "the fabulous lamp of Aladdin would fall short of the power such science, when perfected, would confer on its possessor. Chains could not hold such a man, authority could not come near him, he would be amenable to no laws; armies would be at his command, and the kings of the earth his suppliants. Limits could not be placed in the miraculous wealth of one who could mold obscure and common elements into the richest treasure known to the human race."

As the brilliant vision swayed his mood, he would walk the

room with steps of pride and power, his form dilating, his eye glittering, and that radiance that I have seen in no other countenance flashing over and illuminating his face like sunshine. Another moment and the dream would vanish before the impotence of reality. His step would slacken, his lifted arm fall heavily by his side, his head droop on his breast, the light die from his face, and he would throw himself depressed and exhausted into a chair, to muse and perhaps despair.

Yet this depression, this exhaustion, were never of long endurance. Again the brilliant possible would put aside the impotent actual. Again the blazing eye, the eloquent voice, the graceful gesture, would bear witness to the strong conviction that nerved his inmost being, and sorrow, shame, adversity fade before the splendor of his imagination !

Such was his solitary life ! More full of excitement and change than that of the commonplace many, who meet and mingle in the highways of the world. He had made to himself a kingdom in his solitude, where his brilliant theory held absolute dominion, self-crowned and sceptred. His good angels were all gone. Freedom, affection, religion—he had relinquished these, and he struck hands with, and confided in the gloomy genius that remained to him.

One by one had drifted from him all that gilds our earthly dream. Glory, virtue, pride and honor, God's approval, man's esteem. All were gone, save wild ambition, with its power to dare and scheme.

What marvel, then, that listening to his persuasive voice, gazing on his speaking countenance, witnessing his weird experiments, my young imagination took fire from his, and went hand in hand with his own enthusiasm ? It was, indeed mysterious joy to me to bend

with him over his crucibles, and survey the magic crystallization and change of color that the mixing of elements occasioned ; or to behold fluid divide from fluid, as did the waters of the Red Sea beneath the rod of Moses ; and to image forth, as globule melted into globule, and gradually bodies of light and beauty emerged from opaque molten masses, how God shaped his worlds and flung them forth, one after another, into space, to testify of his power forever !

Under the strong stimulant of fancy, I have indeed felt at times, a quick terror come over me, as though the presence of some unseen witness shadowed the chamber, and gazing round have half dreaded to see some shapeless, gigantic thing emerge from the twilight corners of the room, when the lights burned low, and flit with webbed, bat-like wings, along the dusky walls.

It may have been a noxious exhalation from the crucibles that filled my brain with fantasies like these, quick to come, and to depart ; but from whatever cause they originated, I had at least the power to control any expression that might have betrayed my weakness, or my expectation (call it by what name you will), to my grandfather or Fabius. I believed that one such manifestation on my part would close for me the door of these mysteries forever, and the variety they gave my life had made them invaluable to me.

Of the many experiments my grandfather performed for my amusement only, I will describe but one, as further detail might weary those with whom I am desirous to proceed to the end.

## CHAPTER III.

ONE day, on my entrance—one bitter day in February, I remember, while he was still confined to his sealed chamber—he looked up from the writing which engaged much of his time, and welcomed me with a smile of more than usual significance.

“Wait a little, Lilian, until I have shaped a few more sentences in this endless treatise—this Penelope’s web of mine—and I will show you a new experiment; one at least that you have not witnessed before. Fabius, trim the lamp, it burns badly. Ah, I wish the time was come when electricity would do service instead of oil or gas. I hate this detail—all will be simple, then, ‘in that good time coming.’”

I sat down in quiet expectation, and he went on writing, while Fabius made his usual systematic and nice arrangements in perfect silence. He first set forth a small marble-topped table, on which he placed a crystal globe, with a movable top, a tall blue jar, and a flask—or perhaps one might call it a retort of common green glass. A stopper in the side of the globe was now removed, and the spout of the retort inserted into the aperture, which was made to fit tightly by means of wrappings of some transparent material. My grandfather now approached the table.

“Did you ever hear of the resurrection of flowers, Lilian?—not in the old slow fashion of root and stem, winter and summer, but sudden, wonderful, as that which we are told shall, among men, succeed the sound of the last trump?”

“Grandfather, what a comparison!”



"You shall see for yourself, child, and understand me better. Give me that dead rose, Lilian."

I looked in the direction of his pointing hand, and took from a vase on the mantel-piece a branch which I had broken from a plant in the basement, on which a solitary rose had struggled into wintry bloom, and carried to him some days before. I took the rose from the vase, and gave it to him, as he requested.

"Now look, Lilian!"

I obeyed. The dead rose was thrown into the crystal bowl, and the lid replaced. Then, lifting the cover of the retort, the contents—invisible to me—of the blue jar were hastily dashed into it, and the top as instantly closed down again. In a few moments the spell began to work before my astonished eyes. A faint bluish vapor seemed gradually to fill the transparent sphere, through the filmy clearness of which I could distinctly discern whatever change occurred within.

The rose, blackened and dead, grew at the extremity of a shrivelled stem, about six inches long, covered with faded leaves. It lay helplessly at first at the bottom of the bowl. What was my astonishment, to see it gradually assume an erect position, as a sleeper, half-bewildered, might slowly arise from his couch, and stand upright beside it! The flaccid leaves revived, a tint of green crept through them, the stem filled up, the thorns bristled in fleshy greenness; and now, the rose, first with a faint tinge of its olden color, then with a more vivid hue, swelled, strengthened, deepened, flushed into new life and beauty, and stood arrayed before me, as when freshly broken from the parent stem!

A murmur of admiration escaped my lips. My grandfather stood, with his arms folded, gazing with careless approbation on the limited success of his experiment, not yet completed. For

still more wonderful to witness—had this been possible—was the process by which the tiny shoots at the root of each leaf-stem were impelled to put forth embryo leaves. The plant was growing !

“How beautiful ! how marvellous !” I exclaimed. His sparkling eyes and smile testified his enjoyment of my amazement ; but he said nothing, and, mutely stretching out his hand to Fabius, waited a moment in that attitude of expectancy until the attendant—first seeking them in a drawer—brought and poured on his palm a few of the black conical seeds of the cypress vine.

Again he opened the lid of the crystal bowl, from which a faint, unpleasant odor escaped as he did so, and, throwing them hastily in, closed it again. And again the attentive eye, the folded arms, led me to expect new wonders. Nor was I disappointed.

I saw that from the rose, or its decayed particles, a black mold had been precipitated, in which the stem seemed firmly fixed, and beneath whose soft covering the seeds settled slowly down until hidden from sight.

I watched the process eagerly, and soon—oh, wonderful, magical transition !—the tender whitish germs appeared above their scanty covering, deepened in color, sprung up into rapid development—grew, climbed the confines of the basin ; clung to the rose, now covered with tiny buds, and put forth in profusion their small crimson trumpets.

I gazed enchanted, my lips parted, my hands pressed on my breast, almost fearing to breathe, lest the fairy spell might be broken, when suddenly he lifted the lid.

For a moment the vision of flowers continued ; then, as a dream passes, melted away, leaving the helpless withered branch, and the slender black stem of the cypress vines, as the only witness of

the vanished bloom, save the dark mold that still covered the bottom of the bowl.

"Grandfather, this is sorcery !" I exclaimed.

He smiled. "No, Lilian—nothing but a sport of science, than which I could show you many more marvellous, had I material and patience. All that you saw was effected by the combination of gases, forcing into active impulse the same powers that in their natural condition furnish in a gradual way the life and being of flowers. And now let us reason from analogy. Why cannot the power that can compel dead plants to live again, and seed to germinate in a moment instead of a month, as well compress those energies into sudden vigor, which, in the bowels of the earth, are slowly constructing diamonds?"

"Why not indeed !" I murmured.

"When I reflect," he continued, "that I have so nearly grasped the secret of almost superhuman success in the condensation of diamonds, I can but deplore the necessity I find myself under of abandoning forever a scheme the fruition of which would elevate me and mine to the very pinnacle of earthly grandeur. I am doubted, I am considered a dreamer, by those nearest to me, and who would be the chief beneficiaries of my success. You, even, Lilian, listen to me with distrust."

He hesitated as if waiting for a reply, a disavowal, perhaps, of his accusation. I made none, although greatly impressed by his words and manner. A moment later he went on :

"This is hard to bear, yet I must not forget that in the beginning all important discoveries have been met with mockery and suspicion. Was not Galileo imprisoned? Did they not shut up in an iron cage, as a desperate lunatic, the first man who suggested the use of steam in France? Was not Columbus doubted?

Was not Socrates sacrificed? Was not Christ crucified? In all time the ignorance of man has risen in rebellion against the dawn of science or philosophy. So shall it be to the end. Yet these matters force themselves on human conviction at last, thanks to man's selfishness, to which be all honor!"

He smiled and waved his hand in his peculiar sarcastic way; rose, paced the floor, and continued talking in low but clear tones, as if soliloquizing. His long seclusion had taught him the comfort of this.

"Electricity, by the help of which men are destined to cultivate their fields, propel their ships and carriages, prepare their food, illuminate their cities, communicate, with lightning-speed, from zone to zone; nay, restore life itself in many instances, when all other means have failed; this mightiest power granted to man by Omnipotence, is dormant still, in this first dawn of science. How grand—how Godlike will be its development! Your Greeks, with their Jove and thunderbolts, never dreamed of things like these!"

He turned to me, slightly smiled, paused, then continued his slow musing walk in silence for a time; at last he broke forth again:

"When the balloon ascends amid the shout of boys, or the long drawn breathings of thoughtful men, fearful of the result to human life; how little does the crowd foresee the time when such ascensions shall be affairs of hourly and certain occurrence, and the balloon (aimless and useless now) be considered the safest and speediest method of conveyance. Tennyson, indeed, seems to have thought of this when he speaks of "airy navies grappling in the central blue!" Was not that what he was aiming at, Lilian? What beautiful lines that man writes, by the way. I mean

literally what I say—*lines* ; there are some that haunt me, cut away, like ships drifting from anchor, from all connection of sense or meaning beyond the exquisite fullness of sound, and single images. You remember where he tells of

‘ Summer isles of Eden, lying  
In dark spheres of purple sea.’

Gorgeous, by heaven !

‘ Love took up the glass of time,  
And turned it in his glowing hands.’

What a picture ! Titian might have painted it—he only !

‘ When in wild Mahratta battle,  
Fell my father, evil starred !’

“What a line for sound, for power, for suggesting narrative! A whole history springs out of it at once. By the by, your true poets are your only prophets, you know—eh, Lilian ?” stopping, and turning upon me suddenly with his glittering smile. “ Your practical people never see beyond their own noses, be they long or short, and reduce everything to one level. Old Procrustes was their ancestor, I’m thinking !”

“ I don’t know, grandfather, what to think of prophets or prophecies, beyond what man’s judgment points to—a different thing, after all, from prophecy. Who can know the future, save God ?”

“ And are you sure he knows it, Lilian ?”

“ Grandfather ! Can any one doubt his supreme knowledge ? Such misgivings were blasphemy, it seems to me.”

“ There is no surprise for the Deity then, child. He misses a very great pleasure, I am convinced ! According to you reli-

gious people, he is the cause of all evil, since he foresees and does not prevent it, as well as of all good. Strange, irreconcilable creed ! Believe me, he has something greater to do than to arrange puppets, and pull their wires, or to watch the proceedings of man."

"The Bible tells us, grandfather, that the hairs of our head are counted ; and, that 'not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge.' It makes me feel very happy to believe this, very fearless."

"Believe it, then," he said, gloomily ; "if such be the result, happiness is not easily procured ; find it where you can, even in delusions."

Again he paced the room, his head bowed on his breast, his hands clasped behind him, and again, after an interval of silence, he spoke in those clear, low somnambule tones peculiar to him when soliloquizing ; for he seemed at moments to forget every presence, and to commune with self alone.

"In the last few days I have perfected a system beyond any possibility of failure, now that I have thoroughly tested the amount of power employed, and the means of creating the necessary pressure. This system has been perfected by failure and sacrifice, as have all the successful systems of the world, whether physical or moral. In acquiring the skill and knowledge requisite to my art (that of condensing diamonds) I have used all the jewels in my possession, and I find myself prostrated for means to prosecute my search ; the result of which must be the final triumph of Alchemy !

"This is no vain hypothesis, but a common-sense proceeding, by which diamonds, under certain treatment, can be blended and condensed into one body with the same amount of certainty that

water exposed to peculiar temperature may be hardened into ice. The Indian king, who put to death a missionary for asserting this natural phenomenon, was not more narrow in his prejudices than those who deny the feasibility of my scheme. I am convinced that in a given time, and with certain agents, I can convert any amount of diamonds not larger than a pin's head into their equal, or nearly their equal weight, in one large, brilliant, and uniform mass. I go beyond this. I earnestly believe that with superior assistance to any I now possess, I can create with equal facility, and from the common elements around me, diamonds of inestimable size, and water.

"Have you heard me, Lillian? Do you hear that word, create?" he said, suddenly stopping and surveying me. "A God's privilege until now? A creator of diamonds!—oh, what a divine phrase! Listen, child: the philosopher's stone was nothing to it; no dream of Eastern story equals it; no dumb, submissive genii ever ministered with such unflinching, mechanical fidelity to the owner of lamp, or talisman, or mystic ring, as shall this power to me!

"What a heritage to bequeath to a whole race! Think of it, Lillian—think of it! Power, genius, beauty, luxury, rank itself, tributary to the posterity of that webbed-spider—that stone-grown toad—that sealed pestilence, Erastus Bouverie!"

"Grandfather, do not speak such terrible words—you unnerve me, you wrong yourself!" I approached, and stood beside him, placing my hand on his shoulder soothingly. He had thrown himself on a sofa, and, leaning on its elbow, covered his face with his hands, and his whole frame shook with his strong emotion. After a time he looked up, and I saw, for the first time, tears rolling over his pale and haughty countenance; and all the pity,

all the sympathy of my nature, were stirred by this unwonted sight. I, too, wept.

"You feel for me, Lilian, but in some respects you are like the rest. I am in your eyes only an enthusiastic dreamer."

"Oh, no, grandfather! I know you have great powers; I do believe that you will yet succeed—that is, if it be God's will."

"Give me my life and the diamonds, and I will make the will," he said, almost fiercely, dashing his long, thin hand back against the carved woodwork of the sofa with reckless force. "Lilian, I hate cant—I am afraid this is all talk with you. What makes you think that God troubles himself about man's affairs—He that has worlds to manage—innumerable systems even? It is vanity—it is *worse*—to suppose that he knows the individual from the mass. He stereotypes Creation—He does not set up copy letter by letter; and special knowledge would be the ruin of His gigantic schemes? Believe me, God has nothing to do with us or our affairs. We stand alone."

"Alone, grandfather!" I said, in a low, sorrowful voice. "What a terrible solitude that would be! But, fortunately, God has determined for us in this matter. Yet how can any being of His hand endure his life under such a cloud as this? Our Creator forget us, ignore us! Oh, grandfather, I could not live an hour and believe this terrible thing!"

"We will not talk of creeds," he said, gloomily; "as well reason a man into falling in love, as into believing against the habit of his life. I am unfortunate, perhaps; but incorrigible, nevertheless. I am wrong to be so rough with you, however. Poor child!—poor tender flower blooming in captivity, like Piccioli! As I said before, be deluded, if you will, so that it renders you happy. Ah, Lilian, that is a beautiful word," he added, shaking



his head mournfully ; "it has been a long time since I heard it fall from any lips before you uttered it. Yes, there must be such a thing. Happiness is no myth, as I have sometimes thought it, but real as air and sunshine ; real, but—like them—intangible."

He paused, as if wrapt in thought.

"It is said that women of your temperament are never happy," he continued ; "but I do not believe this. I think, on the contrary, that they possess an internal and perennial fount of joy, which no other influence can wholly quench or sully—not even poverty, Lillian—not even pain—not even shame."

"These things would fall very crushingly on me, grandfather. God's aid alone could sustain me under them."

He gazed at me long and earnestly. "Go," he said, at last ; "I am weary, now—exhausted, almost. Fabius, the Elixir ! Lillian, come soon again !"

As I left the room, I saw Fabius in the rotunda, arranging the vial and glass on a salver. As I passed him he held up the bottle with a galvanic smile ; and the small golden snake rose, and fell convulsively in the fluid.

"There is life in that, Miss Lillian," he said, shaking it before me.

"Life ! What life ?" I thought ; and, for the first time, the true meaning of Coleridge's ghastly picture of "life in death" seemed to flash over me. I passed the old man in silence, and went down, depressed and wretched, to my chamber. I never pitied my grandfather so inexpressibly as after that conversation.

"If he were in the stone cell of a penitentiary," I thought that night, as I lay shedding silent tears over his bitter fate, "alone, as they tell me some men are, and destined to be alone to the very

hour of death ; if, in that stone cell, he could believe that God knew him, pitied him, loved him even ; oh, how preferable, how infinitely less solitary, were his condition ! But to be God-forgotten, God-forsaken—oh, what words are these ! What a mournful doom they image forth to me ! Yet such is the self-uttered sentence of both of my grand-parents Bouverie ! Truly do they invoke on their own heads the terrific words that Samuel spoke to Saul.”

## CHAPTER IV.

I MADE that night a resolution involving a sacrifice, that, petty as it may seem to the reader, cost me dear. My grandfather had doubted my faith in him ; I would convince him, as far as acts of mine could do this, that I did believe in his ability to achieve his scientific schemes—a confidence that I knew he would prize on my part, however injudiciously accorded. I would minister, as far as I was able, to the passion that glowed so vividly amid the ashes of his life, and which seemed alone to light its desolation.

I would carry to him, on my next visit, my diamond cross. I would consult no one in doing this. I had a right to proceed as I saw fit with my own property, it seemed to me ; nor would I, by proposing such a step, arouse objections which would have no weight with me after all, yet which it would give me pain openly to oppose. Precious as was this relic of the past to me, he should have it to do with it as he chose. He should destroy it, if he liked ; take out all of the large stones, one by one, and burn them in his fierce fire, and crush the small bead-edging of minute diamonds that surrounded the jet setting into impalpable dust, if it so pleased him.

I shivered to think of this, for a life of thought was in that cross to me. It was a symbol of my mother's religion, and a legacy of her love. I knew little of its intrinsic value, cared less, attached none to it, save that my father's beloved hand had conferred when he placed it, a marriage gift, on her beloved bosom.

■ This circumstance alone would have hallowed it in my sight ;

but what was this association of feeling even, compared to the hope that the sacrifice I was making might console my grandfather, and assure him of my confidence and affection ; or, perhaps, enable him to wrest one oasis of amusement from the sandy desert of his existence ?

I could offer no better proof, I thought, of the reality of my professions to one who doubted me, perhaps ; a being the most desolate, it appeared to me—belief, ability, and position, severally considered—that the earth bore on all her varied surface—a being the most fatally gifted, the most brilliantly endowed, that I have ever known, or ever should know again.

It was not without tears, and prayers, and many misgivings, that I made this resolution ; but I remembered that my grandfather had said all great victories were won by sacrifice.

Might not this childish one of mine win the divine favor for his projects, which I endeavored to persuade myself were destined to ultimate success ? and smooth away some obstacles from his path to that almost superhuman fortune he promised himself in the future.

When I next visited my grandfather's chamber, I carried with me, in accordance with this resolution, my diamond cross ; and, toward the termination of my visit, placed it in his hand, with a few accompanying words of explanation, murmured, rather than spoken. I was indeed uncertain how he would receive my offering.

"Do I understand you," he said at last, "that you bring me these diamonds of your own free will, and with the request that I may use them in the continuation of my experiments?"

"Such is my wish, grandfather."

"Go then, and when you return again you shall witness the

result. At all events, you shall not be the loser, Lilian, by this act of generous confidence. Give me three days to operate in, and then return. You will not be disappointed."

"I expect nothing, grandfather," I remonstrated. "It is not from any hope of gain, only to amuse your solitude, that I"—

"I understand all this," he interrupted, "and yet I would not despoil you of any portion of your narrow heritage for gratification of mine. I shall succeed, and you shall be repaid."

I could not explain to him (it would have been ungenerous for me to have attempted it) that no reward, except the consciousness of having served him, could at all compensate me for the sacrifice I was making. I was disappointed (such is the strange injustice of the human heart) that he did not properly estimate it. Yet, had he comprehended it with all its bitterness, I should probably have taken pains to efface an impression that must have pained him. With that inconsistency which belongs to a nature made up of opposite qualities, I was dissatisfied with the whole proceeding, and in a moment of childish spleen almost wished that he might fail, so that I might convince him, by my treatment of the disastrous result, of my perfect disinterestedness in the transaction.

It was toward the close of the third day that I again sought the chamber of the alchemist. I had heard him busily employed in his laboratory before I rose, and after I retired to bed, in the room above mine. The fire had roared incessantly under the furnace since we parted, and the light, quick tread peculiar to him met my attentive ear, from the upper floor. I had distinguished also the slow and cautious steps of Fabius in his work of ministry, and I perceived plainly that a great experiment was in progress.

When I opened the door, on my return to his apartments, I saw my grandfather seated as usual at his writing-table. He looked up I thought with a troubled and anxious glance as I entered.

"He has failed," I said to myself. "Poor grandfather, I pity you. You are disappointed!"

I stood beside him a moment without speaking, and laying my hand on his shoulder, looked intently into his face.

"Lilian," he said, "you gave me your little cross. I return you a jewel of more than twenty times its value."

As he spoke he lifted before me a small ring-box of mother of pearl, set with turquoise, which I had noticed by his inkstand when I entered, and touching a spring, disclosed the wondrous gem within.

A diamond as large as the iris of a human eye flashed and flickered within; for only by these terms can I describe its living and bewildering lustre.

"Take it," he said, "Lilian. This marvellous stone is yours." I put it gently aside.

"No, grandfather, I do not want your jewel. Your success repays me."

"I command you to take it," he said a little sternly, "and to preserve the whole matter an inviolate secret," and again he extended it to me. "It is justly yours," he added as I received the box, dropping his head again above his writing, and proceeding with his occupation as if unconscious of my presence.

I was heartsick, and sat down, on a low velvet stool, at some distance from the table, still holding the box carelessly unopened in my hand. I did not want the jewel. It could not replace my cross, and yet left no reasonable room for discontent such as I

felt. Tears gathered in my eyes, yet I sat in silence—a silence only broken by the scratching of his rapid pen.

“Lilian!” The word rang out so suddenly that it startled me, and I looked up from my reverie to meet my grandfather’s piercing gaze riveted on me.

“You are wrong in supposing that I do not appreciate the motive of your gift. I understand perfectly its self-sacrificing nature. Yet I thought I knew you well enough to suppose you would prefer I should not allude to this.”

“Oh, grandfather!” I exclaimed in a deprecating voice, “I am quite ashamed”——

“Your gift,” he continued, “has placed me far on the progressive path to the accomplishment of all I desire, therefore it has not been made in vain. Yet it is natural that you, who are no lapidary, should attach little consequence to this success, as manifested in that splendid stone. Bring it to me; on second thought I will keep it until I can have it set for you in a ring as a solitaire, or in brooch or bracelet clasp, surrounded with rubies or emeralds (of which I have a box full unpolished in my secretary), as you prefer. You will like it better thus, and forget your cross.

“Grandfather,” I said, willing to waive the subject, “if you have rubies and emeralds, why not concentrate these as well as diamonds? They are greatly enhanced in value by size, and are more readily procured.”

“Because they lose color, and become opaque in the process, and are without that power of resistance which keeps its lustre in the diamond’s heart through the most intense pressure. See,” he said, approaching me and opening before me the box that contained the gem he had given me. “Was any star of heaven

ever more radiant, more flashing, than this stone? Was any human eye—yours even, Lilian—ever more full of vitality and fire?”

I smiled at the subtle compliment, and stooping down to observe the stone more narrowly than I had yet done, I saw what appeared to me a small bright eye directly in its centre.

“Oh, how strange!” I cried. “Grandfather, did you ever observe an eye in the very heart of this jewel—a living, human eye?”

“Your own, probably,” he said, taking it hastily from my hand, “reflected there in Nature’s choicest mirror;” and closing the lid of the box, he placed it in his bosom. “And now,” he said, “that you have witnessed my success, I would speak to you once more very earnestly indeed of the last hope that remains to me. Your grandmother has diamonds—you have seen them I know—badly set, composed of innumerable small stones, without peculiar brilliancy. Could I obtain these, I shall have gained my first foothold in the temple of fortune. Lilian, you have influence over her. It must be so; your uprightness, your directness, your judgment must gain this for you, with all who know and love you. I charge you to use this influence for the great end I have endeavored to portray to you. Procure those diamonds for me, only for one day, and I will rain riches on your grandmother in return, beyond the wildest dreams of Alchemy.”

“Grandfather,” I replied, “I cannot venture on this subject again. Once before, you desired me to make the suggestion. It was coldly received, and I was forbidden to allude again to such a possibility. Perhaps if you would show my grandmother the result of your last experiment, she might be moved from the resolution.”



He mused and smiled.

"She gave as her principal reason for not complying with my request, I believe, that she considered the diamonds sacredly yours ; the only heritage she had to leave you, I think she said, except this domain of Bouverie, with its worn fields and sparse woodlands ?"

"These were the words, grandfather. You recall them to me perfectly."

"Then it is to you, the real owner of the diamonds, that I shall address myself."

What more he might have said remained unspoken, for at this moment my grandmother's light knock was heard at the door.

He rose to open it, greeting her as she entered, with that rare grace and cordiality of manner, that made him so irresistible in my eyes ; but she, as was her custom, walked across the floor with a grave and steady step, and seated herself at a distance from him.

"We were speaking, Camilla, ere you came," he said, "of that wonderful step in science which I am on the eve of taking, the concentration of diamonds ; and I was expressing a hope to Lillian, that you might yet be prevailed upon to lend yourself to my undertaking."

Her brows contracted slightly, as though the subject were distasteful to her, and a cloud came over her features.

"I had hoped," she said, "that you had dismissed this matter from all further consideration, as an entire fallacy. I am grieved to find that the dream still haunts you."

"Why does he not show her the proof of his success," I thought, involuntarily entering the lists for him mentally against

her skepticism. "How does she know it is a fallacy? How hard she is, to censure him thus!"

To my astonishment, he did nothing of the kind ; but standing before her, and fixing her with his glittering eye, the Alchemist poured forth his rapid and eloquent defence of his cherished scheme, and appealed to her ambition, her pride, her hope for future distinction, to advocate his measures.

"Erastus," she replied, calmly, when he had finished his brilliant appeal ; "I cannot go with you along the path of visions. I am no sophist, no dreamer ; I would that I had your capacity for finding substance in shadows. But with me, all things must be real to be of the slightest value."

"Camilla," he remonstrated ; "throw off, I conjure you, this dreary mantle of skepticism, and lend yourself to my efforts to build up the future, and redeem the past ! Give me your useless diamonds. Let me experiment with these, and when a stone larger than the famous Koh-i-noor, the Hindoos hold so sacredly, meets your sight as the product of my labors, recognize the destiny that awaits you and your posterity. Think of it !"—a favorite mode of emphasizing of his.—"the raising of your hand shall be the signal for monarchs to obey. Arts, science, progress of all kinds, be stayed or facilitated as you will. The first position of the world will be assigned to its richest denizen, and your posterity, perhaps, occupy the thrones of the nations ! In this atmosphere of power and pride, your youthful brilliancy, your happiness will be restored to you."

She groaned, she covered her eyes with her hands—a few broken words escaped her lips.

"Restored ! Oh, what can restore the dead ?"

I do not think she meant this as a reproach. It was wrung from

her by what she felt the bitter, yet unintended mockery of his last remark. My grandfather's face was a study. Arrested in his sanguine flight he stood with one hand upraised, and an expression of confusion and surprise upon his countenance that evidenced itself in a thousand rapid changes. His color became ghastly, and his still parted lips trembled like those of a man in a strong ague fit. The lurid and continuous flashing of his eye denoted the strong anger that was moving him, and must, I thought, had she looked up and met its blazing light, have withered her who had offended him.

Yet, in a few moments the storm was apparently lulled, and when my grandmother recovered herself and raised her head again, no trace of unusual emotion could be discerned on the plastic features of her husband.

Nor was the subject of the diamonds again recurred to during our visit; but I am inclined to think the wish to possess them had only yielded to the determination to do so whenever this could be put into effect with entire convenience.

On looking back, though unsuspecting then of such an intention on his part, I am convinced that he sounded me repeatedly afterward on the subject of my concurrence in his desires and plans. It would have been better for him, perhaps, had he openly proposed them. The shock of open denunciation or rebuff might have brought him to his senses, by baring the depths of his inmost motives, which he managed so dexterously to gloss over in his own eyes. Sophist as he was, he needed to hear the voice of truth from others, that he might discern the snares of his own spirit; as harsh winds blow away the accumulated leaves that hide the pitfalls of the forest.

From this time his interest in his chemical experiments seemed

to decline, and the fires in the laboratory above my head were extinguished.

I missed the quick firm step at morn and night, that had grown familiar and even pleasant to my ear, and the stillness of the upper chamber seemed almost that of death.

## CHAPTER V.

SPRING came again, and the captive was released from the prison within the prison, the winter chamber—compared to which the summer apartment, filled with the fresh breath of heaven, seemed luxury indeed. Even the poor tortoise seemed to recognize the greeting of nature, and dragged itself to bask daily beneath the genial skylight with its wealth of noontide sunbeams.

From the outer world, with other sunny influences, came fond and pleasant letters to me from my only two correspondents. Sir Everard Howe's portion of these epistles was written in a manly, earnest, and entertaining style, wholly characteristic of the writer. A reader would have confounded the lover with the friend, had he been unacquainted with the true relations subsisting among us, and given to the vivid, artistic and tender letters of Jasper that position due to another.

Let me mention here that I had been forbidden to communicate my engagement to Jasper for the present, and had without a question obeyed the command. It is wonderful how soon the outside habit of obedience paralyzes independence, and goes to the very source of thought. I had ceased to arraign motives or investigate causes; they only puzzled me. I was content with the irresponsibility my submission brought with it, and had in more ways than one "lain down my neck to the yoke of Bouverie."

To these letters I wrote occasional replies, always submitted to

my grandmother's perusal before dispatched. Those to Jasper Bouverie were directed and forwarded by Dr. Quintil, accompanied, as they usually were, by others, which formed a package. Those to Everard Howe, fewer in number, more restrained in character, were directed in sequence and by my own hand to those ports of which he had given me a list before leaving Bouverie.

Edith Howe, his sister, had I knew gone to the continent on a tour with her uncle, Colonel de Courcy. Everard had described her as a slender, beautiful girl of sixteen, with great sweetness, and childlike vivacity of character, attributable in a great measure to her early mode of life. She was the youngest of six children, all of whom, with the exception of her eldest brother and herself, had died in infancy, and was the petted darling of her parents, and the great consolation of her mother's widowed existence.

The grave and stately man to whose care she passed after that mother's death, had been, like most persons of this nature, perfectly ruled by and fascinated with her innocent, confiding gaiety, and had gone in his indulgence to her whims and caprices, even beyond the original spoiling she had received. A thoroughly sweet nature however can never be entirely spoiled after all, either by severity or overweening indulgence. The experiment so fatal to the mean and the commonplace, is seldom more than a passing inconvenience or trial of strength to the sunny and elastic temperament of generosity and affection.

So Edith Howe was only a little odd and fanciful, her brother said, but infinitely kind, forgiving, and tenderhearted, and docile even, when the slightest semblance of authority was manifested. Her inflexible governess, Miss Rhoda Montade (or some such

name, I forget exactly what), would have broken her birdlike spirit into inanity, had not Colonel de Courcy resolutely maintained her right to be gay, impulsive, a little foolish even, if it made her happy, so that she never transcended the true bounds of propriety or respect for others.

It was from this childlike personage that I received a letter, dated "Florence, February," that unveiled the truth to me as to the fatal hold I had over Jasper's feelings, and snatched a veil from my own never to be replaced.

I had before received her congratulations when she became aware of my engagement to her brother, and was amused at the view she took, naturally enough perhaps, of this contemplated union. It was evident that she conceived all its advantages to be on one side, and considered her the most fortunate of women, who could enlist the affections of her idolized relative.

To reply to this letter had been the most difficult task of my life. I felt a struggling indignation as I wrote, wholly at variance with the commonplaces I was forced to employ, and inconsistent with the tender relations that I felt ought to exist between us. Her letter had been affectionate, even if injudicious and slightly indelicate; mine, though cold, was a model of propriety.

She felt that something had been wrong in hers, but evidently could not conjecture what.

"I fear," she wrote, "my letter did not please you; your reply seemed to me constrained; but perhaps I had painted you in my imagination differently from the truth. I knew that you were young, and I supposed all young people must be gay, careless, impulsive, as I knew myself to be. I forgot that you had never been thrown with persons of your own age, although Everard had

told me this, and that naturally from intercourse with older persons, you must have acquired much of their gravity and dignity. Tell me that it is this habit of your life that makes you write so distantly to me, dear sister Lilian, for such I already wish to consider and call you, and that you are not offended with me, or, worse than all, indifferent to me. I wish you would reassure me about this matter as quickly as you can. And now let me tell you of a little adventure I have had recently, in which you are somewhat interested.

“It has been our habit to go almost daily to a gallery in Florence, where my uncle is having a picture copied. He is devoted to art ; but I grew very weary after a while looking at the same paintings all the time ; and transferred my interest very soon from the pictures to the artists employed in copying them. I made the acquaintance of such a sweet woman—a Miss Steinforth, a Dutch lady, who speaks a little English, and a great deal better French than I do. She is copying a Madonna, for her own amusement, not to sell. But you will not care much to hear about her ; she is a little *passée*, as the saying is—quite thirty, although looking much younger, as fair women often do ; and is soon to marry one Signor Baldini, who has recently come to fortune, after having been long a master of drawing in Leyden, where the attachment sprang up between them. Seated next to her, I remarked the handsomest and most interesting young man I ever saw, and, bending over his shoulder, one day—quite unperceived by him, of course—I saw the word ‘Jasper’ traced on the edge of the canvas he was painting on. I knew, dear Lilian, that you had an ‘Uncle Jasper,’ an artist ; but I supposed him to be a middle-aged gentleman, and never thought of his identity with this quiet youth. In truth, his strange silence struck me at last



even painfully, and I whispered one day to Miss Steinforth, 'Does the young man next to you never speak? I have seen you pass over your sketches to him, and he returns them without a comment. Is he dumb, or only stupid and impolite?'

"Then came an explanation that convinced me this was the mute Uncle Jasper, of whom you had spoken to Everard, and he in turn to me; and so I insisted on an immediate introduction, and we shook hands, which seemed to surprise him at first, until I, in my impulsive way, told him why I was attracted by his name, mentioning—although, of course, he knew it before—the engagement between my brother and his niece as the cause.

"I supposed at the moment that he was mortified that he could not speak to me, for I never saw a man turn so pale. The brush fell from his fingers in his embarrassment, and Miss Steinforth recovered it for him without attracting his notice. Just then uncle called me a little impatiently, I thought; and I flew to him, wishing to acquaint him with my discovery as soon as possible, so that he too might form the acquaintance of your uncle Jasper, as well as excuse my delay.

"Looking back, I saw that the young gentleman had leaned his head on his arm, and it then occurred to me that he might be ill, or that I might have said something to pain him, as I often do, quite unintentionally, of course; but I cannot recall anything of the sort. Do ask him, dear Lilian! He has never returned to the gallery since that day, and Miss Steinforth says he has left Florence for a time. She thinks he has unexpected business, as his atelier remains unchanged, and that he will soon return. I do hope this is the truth, and that he does not, as I have feared since, disapprove of your marriage; though what any one could see to object to in my brother, I cannot conceive. He is, in my estima-

tion, the most perfect of his sex, and, of course, in yours also, dear Lilian ; so explain this, if you can."

The letter ran on for pages in this girlish strain ; but the substance to me was in the extract I have made.

I replied to it kindly and promptly, directing my letter to Taunton Tower, as I was advised to do ; but I carried about with me a sick and sore heart from this time, and the chain I had forged pressed heavily about me.

"I had written to Jasper of your engagement," my grandmother said, on reading Edith's letter, "shortly before this was written. I would the shock could have been made more gentle to him ; but it is over now, and he will bear it like a man. This giving away our dear ones," she added, with a sad smile, "is one of the most bitter necessities of our earthly condition. In heaven all this will be changed, dear Lilian."

I did not answer her ; I only pressed my hand to my breast, and groaned—an irrepressible groan—and a strong hand seemed to grasp my throat.

Oh, often, often, since that hour, has that iron hand returned with its invisible pressure, irresistible as unseen. Often, in the halls of gaiety or pride—in church or concert, or lecture-room—in quiet chamber, in crowded thoroughfare—often, through long, solitary night, has that grasp of steel maintained its inexorable hold, as though the angel with whom Jacob wrestled were present to me, strong only in endurance, not resistance.

In proportion as my restless heart swayed me to dissatisfaction and melancholy, did my intellect reach out for new resources. More than ever did I feel the charm—the necessity, almost—of my grandfather's society, in the desire to escape from myself.

I have elsewhere said that the very difference of our views and tastes about many subjects, wholly similar as they were concerning others, formed a source of interest and variety that never flagged between us.

My mind had, I think, something of the "antique" in its very construction ; or, perhaps, my early reading had impressed me deeply and indelibly. I idolized the type the Greeks have left us of the lofty, the pure, the ideal, whether in poetry or art. There was something that thrilled me in all connected with this people. I could almost believe that I had lived among them in some former state of existence, so vividly did their characteristics stand forth to me from the background of time.

Not so my grandfather. He laughed at the quaint ignorance of those "refined savages," as he called the ancient Greeks and Romans. He disdained all usages founded on old customs.

"Go back to the Jews at once, if you want true men of nature's molding—bad, bold, unscrupulous ; grander, though, than any that lived after them, if truth be told," he said.

"Give me Moses, David, Solomon, Joseph—an exception—Jacob even, if you will have specimens of antiquity ; but spare me your florid orators, your wreath-crowned generals, your philosophers in a nutshell, your gentlemen athletes, in the category of true greatness. And, as for modern times, compare Epaminondas to Washington, Alexander to Napoleon, Homer to Sir Walter Scott, Socrates to Christ ; and where do you leave these ancients ? Immeasurably behind !"

"Christ, grandfather, was inspired if no more—even you will acknowledge this ; he is out of the question ; nor can we justly call him modern ! Washington was chosen for his mission, therefore irresistible. Napoleon, too, was a scourge in the hand of

the Almighty, we cannot doubt ; yet as men, as gentlemen, what comparison between him and Alexander."

"Alexander !" he scoffed ; "a braggart, a mere adventurer. Straws show how the wind blows ; a man's character is revealed most clearly often by trifles. Remember the trick about Bucephalus ; the effort to claim descent from Jupiter Ammon, even at the sacrifice of his mother's fame ; the pretending to drink the cup from the hand of Philip, his physician—you know the anecdote—I have never doubted he threw the contents behind his couch. It was a shabby fraud."

"Oh, grandfather, that was such a noble thing ! I could not bear to discredit it. You might as well ask me to disbelieve Sir Philip Sidney's surrender of the draught of water to the dying soldier. It is beautiful—it is comforting to believe these things!"

"Then the slaying of Clitus," he continued ; "the wanton destruction of Tyre, just as though a bad boy were to break up a hive of bees, for the mere fun of the thing, more than the love of honey ; the absurd cruelties afterward (absurd because unnecessary) ; and to add another instance of his cunning, his collusion with Jaddus, high priest of Jerusalem, when he pretended to have had a vision confirmed by the conduct of this worthy individual, who betrayed, by previous concert of course, his people and stronghold of Jerusalem into the hands of the usurper ! These things and many more rise before me when I think of Alexander—the sot—the sensualist !" He paused, then continued :

"How was it with Napoleon ? He quieted domestic anarchy, at least ; he crushed foreign despotism, he embellished his country, he repelled its foes, and but for that great mistake, the Russian campaign"—

"Great injustice, grandfather !" I interrupted.

"Call it what you will, child. All unsuccessful steps are erroneous, of course ; but for that he might have been the Emperor of Europe."

"Leave out England, grandfather."

"I do—I do," he said, with sudden enthusiasm ; for he loved his country to his heart's core. "Should the whole political world be overwhelmed, England would be the Ararat, whose steep would appear above the waters for the Ark of human safety to anchor against. She is a volcano, child ; fierce fires consume her, but no foreign enemy can work her injury ; and after all, an occasional explosion will throw off the boiling lava, and all go right again—and the mountain stand through time."

"I, too, am English," I said ; "and feel the stirring of ancient blood in my veins ; but, oh, grandfather ! this new land of ours is so much dearer to me !"

"Little renegade," he said, smiling archly on me ; "Democrat, Filibuster, fit descendant of the Norman pirate ; answer me, Why do you love this land ?"

"For its magnificence, its strength, its freedom—its widespread happiness—its unequalled beauty !"

I stood beside him as I spoke, and looked into his face almost tearfully ; for the theme moved me.

"You are mistaken as to one thing," he said. "In Europe, where men accept their positions, they are happier than here. No repining there—no discontent, because"—

"No hope of change," I interrupted. "Is it not so, grandfather ?"

"Well, perhaps so ; but better thus : permanence is next to happiness, you know ; my oracle, Mr. Carlyle, says so."

"It depends upon what that permanence is," I made answer

low. "It is the worst of some conditions ; it seems to me that they are fixed."

"I know—I know," he muttered, with agitation.

"I am speaking generally," I said, catching at the interpretation he evidently placed upon my words. "Not individually ; but, oh, grandfather ! what a glorious thing it is, that each man should have his opportunity of distinction ! When we think of the old half dead Brahmin government, what shocks us half so much as that "Mark of Caste," to which all its decay can be traced ? No change—no progress, no development can come to a nation so governed. I like rotation, grandfather.

This is but an instance of the manner in which he permitted me to contend with him, however ineffectually, and maintain my own opinions. I think I am constituted strangely. Those that I love have little power to sway my estimate of things. I would sacrifice my life for any of these ; but not my convictions. Indeed, I have never regarded belief of any kind as dependent on the will, when pure and unprejudiced. It is involuntary as existence itself.

## CHAPTER VI.

As spring advanced, a change I could not account for, occurred in that lowly member of the household of Bouverie, the reptile "Evil Merodach." What Robinson Crusoe's parrot was to him, was this poor wretch to me in that solitary existence of ours. It is perhaps the worst, most morbid feature of such a life that small matters assume too much importance, interest one too vitally. Convents are agitated to the centre, it is said, by the breaking of an altar utensil, or the construction of a new dish ; and bitter animosities kindled by the least preference manifested by the superior to one over another. So in that monastic life of ours, the smallest event was matter of discussion or consideration, and the welfare of the meanest creature invested with unreasonable importance.

I had formed a strong regard for that poor, uncouth tortoise, connected as it was with my grandfather's misfortunes, and embalmed by a sort of romance which I could not dis sever from the Russian prison, the lyre, and the sacrificed master of whom nothing but the fragment of a name remained—Evan Meredith.

The strange manifestation, too, on the part of the creature of intelligence and attachment had deeply interested me. It seemed at war with its natural torpor and apathy that it should come so freely to the familiar sound of the lyre ; or even of its own name when uttered in musical accents, pitched in imitation of the instrument with which its existence seemed bound up.

I had overcome my repugnance to its reptile hideousness and

could bear to see the misshapen head thrust almost into my hand for crumbs of cake, which I rarely forgot to bring with me, and the grotesque rejoicing before rain-time, accompanied as it was by all sorts of mincing steps and affected airs, never ceased to amuse me. I even fancied that Merodach had a peculiar joy in my presence, evidenced by a more rapid step when I summoned him than when Fabius or my grandfather called him, and a sort of fawning motion of the head. All this ceased suddenly. The creature became dull and dejected, took its food in larger quantities, and at longer intervals than before, avoided the sunlight under the glass where it had loved so much to bask, and remained most of the time sullenly ensconced in its tub, a safe retreat from molestation of all sort.

"Your poor tortoise is sick, grandfather," I said one day, "or perhaps dying of old age, for you have no means that I know, of ascertaining its present term of life, and it may have been one hundred and fifty years old when you first made its acquaintance."

"Evil is not a very old fellow I know, Lilian, from unmistakable signs; he is sick, however—mentally, if not physically; his *soul*, as you call it, has departed."

"Do you mean that a turtle can be demented, grandfather, or become imbecile? Elephants do, they say; and I have seen a cat so eccentric as to be probably deranged. But as to soul, grandfather"——

"Reason, then," he interrupted impatiently, "the guiding principle of intelligence, whatever that may be—one name is as good as another. 'Evil' has lost that, and is now no more than animated dust. A most convincing proof to me of the truth of materialism, and the transient and conditional nature of mind."




Just at that moment poor Merodach, as if to illustrate his master's remark, thrust forth his head, covered with a plaster.

"He has been wounded," I said, "and Fabius is trying to cure him ; I suppose that is what ails him, grandfather."

"Fabius has renewed the dressing, which constantly comes off in the tub, that is all. The wound was inflicted intentionally, Lilian (though I confess with reluctance on my part), to carry out a great principle of science, of metaphysics even. Give me credit for considerable self-sacrifice in this matter, if you please.

"I had been studying Redii, an eminent naturalist, child, and found that by removing the brain of a tortoise, he had convinced himself of the identity of mind and matter. The question is so curious, and this species the only one on which the experiment has ever been successfully made, owing to some obtuseness of the nervous system, I suppose, that enables it to survive the operation, that I was tempted to try it—you have no idea how I have been bored for want of an object lately, since my materials for chemical experiments have all given out—and the result is determination of the exact limit between reason and instinct. You see the animal still eats, seeks the water ; these things are instinctive, but it no longer knows the voice of its keeper, or is alive to sentiments of gratitude and affection ; these things appertain to reason. Now, reason being extinguished through the medium of the brain, its stronghold, the animal retains only the mechanical.—But what is the matter, Lilian ! Good God ! crying, and for what ?"

"Poor, poor creature, is this your end ?" I could not help exclaiming in a voice broken with sobs.

" very glorious end, Lilian, for a reptile to meet. A very

famous death shall be Merodach's. Think of it ! Science has made a new convert through this insignificant creature. I am convinced now of what I doubted before, the possibility of laying down the exact limits of instinct, which seems so often merged into reason as to deceive us sometimes in their identity. Animals have both, that is evident—soul, as you call it in men, only because greater, more universal”——

“ Do not let us argue now, grandfather, I am not equal to it. It was a dreadful thing to do, to torture your poor little faithful companion in adversity, the creature that knew you, that loved you, that confided in you, that came at your call, that fed from your hand, that comforted you in prison ! I hate this terrible thing you call science, that makes life a mere plaything. Why, this creature was bound to you by sacred ties ! There have been murders from passion and despair, less cruel in the eyes of God than this deed. To take away its limited sense, to make an idiot of it, to torture it, your little benefactor ! How could you do it, grandfather ; how dared you to do such a thing ?”

He rose, he paced the room, his lips were white with rage, his eye blazed like a phosphoric match kindled in darkness. Yet he was silent. This was but for a moment. He suddenly commanded himself, and approached me with his brilliant sardonic laugh, speaking through his set teeth, walking as if he would walk over me.

“ Do you bewail thus the fate of every chicken your grandmother's cook wrings the neck of ? Do you reproach Dr. Quintil thus bitterly when he orders a lamb to be slaughtered for the table ? Or do you reserve for me the stores of your sentimental humanity, your puerile compassion !”

“ This is a different case, grandfather,” I said, rising in my

turn, and wiping my eyes indignantly. "Yet, I feel that I have transcended my province (you do well to remind me of it) in speaking to you thus. Forgive me, and let me go."

He had taken my hand as I spoke.

"And when will you come again," he said, with a sudden change of mood and manner; and in that tremulous tone that always moved me so vitally; "when will you—forgive me?"

"Not—not—until Merodach is dead, grandfather," I answered, repelling the tide of tenderness that surged through my bosom as I spoke, and made me feel almost like falling at his feet.

"But my experiment is incomplete, Lilian. Redii says: 'The tortoise will live six months after its brain has been removed;' and a week only has elapsed, since this operation was performed. This is unreasonable."

"Farewell, then, grandfather—my decision is taken," and I turned to leave the room.

"You only want to gain your point, like all women, Lilian," he said, swinging on his heel, and walking away. "This is sheer tyranny. Go, if you will, and stay while you choose; I hope I shall be able to live for a time without you."

"I only want to see the poor creature out of his pain, grandfather; that is all! When Fabius brings me Merodach dead, I will return—never before then."

I paused at the door to speak these words. He advanced toward me, looking steadily in my face, as if he sought to intimidate me.

"Have I heard you rightly?" he inquired. "Never; was this the word you employed?"

"Never, so help me God," I said, firmly lifting up my right hand in token of the pledge. Then dropping it, I added: "For

your sake, grandfather, I make this resolve, as well as for my own. Your victim must be released before we meet again, in justice to all parties."

I passed away from his astonished gaze. As I closed the door I heard him laughing and muttering derisively ; but that night Fabius stood beside me, with the dead tortoise lying on his hand, and placed a slip of paper on mine, on which was written in that small clear character, I knew to be his own—these words from my grandfather.

"Come to-morrow, as usual ; the obstacle is removed. May no other ever interpose between us. Life is death without my child."

Without an allusion to the subject of discord, we met again. A week or two later the prepared shell of poor Merodach with its weird, syllabic inscription was hanging on the wall by the uncouth lyre which had governed him in life—mute from that hour !

My grandfather had said that small acts indicated a man's character, and I believed with him. Carrying out this idea, what did not the wanton destruction of the sole, constant companion he had known for years suggest to me ? for he had told me what a sense of companionship even his mute presence afforded him during long sleepless nights ; and how pleasant was the sound to his ear, of the creature stirring the water in his tub, or dragging his slow feet across the floor in the absence of other noises.

I could not bear to follow out the clue thus thrown down. I could not bear to imagine the terrific past ! I closed my eyes upon it all, and again resigned myself to that delicious companionship, in which my wounded feelings found their sweet refuge.

Yet not without the frequent thought, "What will become of him when I am gone? Who will console him when my life is removed from his? How will he bear the knowledge that very soon his eyes shall rest on my face no more? God pity my poor grandfather!"

## BOOK FIFTH.

" Oh, touch it not, Phillario,  
Oh, touch it not, this yellow pestilence  
Laid waste my Eden."

FAZIO (*Milman*).

" Mark me, Clotilda,  
And mark me well, I am no desperate wretch,  
Who borrows an excuse from shameful passion,  
I am a wretched but a spotless wife."

MATURIN (*Bertram*).

" Whither my heart has gone, there follows my hand, and not elsewhere ;  
For where the heart goes before, like a lamp, and illumines its pathway,  
Many things are made clear, that else lie hidden in darkness."

EVANGELINE (*Longfellow*).

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

## BOOK FIFTH.

### CHAPTER I.

BISHOP CLARE came as usual in the month of May, bringing with him the small package of gold that was remitted semi-annually from England through him to my grandmother, its ostensible recipient. She showed me this before transmitting it to my grandfather.

"How much this would purchase, Lilian!" she said, "and we need many things that we must still do without."

"But this is legally yours, grandmother."

"Not morally, Lilian; therefore I must not touch it; and the new piano, and the carpet for the dining-room, and twenty other needful things, must remain matters of anticipation still. This gold, which might surround our lonely lot with comforts, goes to feed that fierce furnace that roars so dismally over our heads, like the fires of hell, Lilian!"

I had seldom seen her so excited about temporal matters as on this occasion.

"Take it to him," she said, lifting the package from the table, and extending it to me; "and, if you choose, ask him for what you want. Natural affection may for once restrain his self-indulgence."

"I will remonstrate with him," I said, "on the injustice of his course. I will represent your patient care and economy"——

"Do nothing of the sort," she interrupted, "if you value his



affection, his esteem ; he would never forgive you—perhaps drive you from him ignominiously.”

“ I have spoken to him very plainly on many subjects,” I rejoined ; “ and once or twice I have offended him, I know, but he has always forgiven me freely, frankly.”

“ This is a different affair. He amuses himself with your independence in discussion—he has told me so ; but a matter of such delicacy you must not venture to approach.”

Thus warned, I sought his presence, and, after delivering the package of gold, which he received with the glee of a child made happy by a roll of candies, I ventured to prefer my request, introducing the subject nearest my heart in a very artistic manner, as I thought.

“ Grandfather, you have never heard me play,” I said.

“ No, child ; how should I, with my sedentary habits ? The mountain will not come to Mahomet, and Mahomet cannot go to the mountain, you know ; but your singing pleases me. It reaches me from below, sometimes.”

“ Ah, I did not know that my voice was so piercing. True, I do sing very often without the piano, of late, in my grandmother's room, whence the sound reaches you readily. Our old instrument is so unmusical ! It shrieks out, when I strike it, as if it was hurt, and I can but pity the tortured keys. I expect to see the spirit of Clementi—its maker, you remember—rise to avenge its wrongs, some day. I am quite superstitious about abusing the poor old spinnet any longer.”

“ Harpsichord, child—give it the true name. It was a very grand one in its day. Well, well, I suppose you want a new one. I am sorry that I cannot gratify you just now. I need what *means* I have for important purposes, sustained, as I am, you

know, almost entirely by that costly remedy, 'the elixir of gold.' I shall have to make a new supply before very long, for see, Lillian," he said, lifting the vial before my eyes from its case on the marble slab beside him, "it is more than half gone, and it will take all this gold to make a new supply. Yet, to show you that I am no miser, as my refusal to comply with your request might make you think, I will share with you the inestimable privilege I have extended to no one else, and you shall drink with me hereafter, when you will, the draught of life."

We were sitting in the large circular hall, lit by the great skylight—the sides of which opened within, like those of the cabin of a ship, making no change in the aspect of the roof without—and through the dropped sashes, the soft May wind crept wooingly, stirring the long, sable-silvered locks of the prisoner; while the glory of the vernal sun gilded his pale, refined features. I shall never forget his appearance as he stood before me that morning, holding the flask of amber light in one hand, and the slender Venetian glass he used for this draught daintily above in the other, dressed in his close-fitting black velvet robe, like some weird Italian doctor, offering, perhaps, an antidote for poison, or essaying new combinations of deadly properties for one of the "Medici."

I waved the glass aside.

"No, grandfather," I said, laughing, and looking into his face, "keep your precious elixir for those who need it. I have life enough in my veins without any assistance from science."

His brow suddenly darkened, and his eyes sparkled. His white teeth gleamed.

"You are afraid of me, girl," he said, "like all the rest; you doubt, you discredit what you cannot comprehend. Be it so!"

He was turning away, when my hand arrested him. His words

had struck one of the subtlest springs of my being. I was not to be defied.

"I am not afraid of you," I replied, "and you shall see that I am not. Give me the glass—now pour."

"If I knew it were poison itself I would drink it now," I thought, "rather than he should judge me thus."

"Afraid of you, grandfather? Oh, no! that could never be!" I added, aloud; and I received the glass into which the flashing fluid had been carefully dropped, with a smile of confidence.

As I did so, Fabius gave, for the first time since I had known him, symptoms of being something more than a mere automaton—signs even of alarming vitality. He stepped forward from his obscure corner, his usually imperturbable face was agitated; and, standing behind his master, he waved his hands wildly up and down, in a menacing and deprecating manner.

I looked at him with something of derision, his agitation seemed so unnecessary and pitiable, unwonted as it was. I grasped the slender glass, inhaled for a moment the rich, almond-like perfume of its contents, raised it to my lips, and drank them off, with a steady eye fixed on my grandfather's face.

I was acting out, certainly, that discredited anecdote of Alexander and his physician.

The draught coursed through my veins like liquid fire. I dropped the glass—it shivered in fragments at my feet. At the same time my grandfather's face faded from my sight, and I heard his voice speaking as at a great distance.

"Child," it said, "did you ever drink gold before? The essence of five sovereigns was in that glass! Speak! How does it sit with you? Ha! can it be the dose was overstrong? Lillian, you are ill—fainting. Help, Fabius, she is dying!"

I heard no more. I seemed in a vast room of purest crystal, domed and pillared with glass, and in the centre of which was a great vessel of the same transparent material, containing a golden, never resting serpent, with a crimson crest, and diamond eyes. Flowers and fruit of the most delicious odors and tempting hues, grew freely in this crystal hall ; and beautiful girls, waving long wreaths of flowers, glided in and out between the plants in a sort of slow mystic measure.

The whole scene was flooded with intense sunlight, as was my being with perfect and ineffable delight and dreamy enjoyment. Presently low strains of music seemed to fill the air ; the harmony increased in volume, swelled, loudened, burst into a crash of stupendous melody, and the scene dissolved as a dream melts away into the harsh reality of daylight. My senses were restored, yet still I lay bound hand and foot, in a pleasing lethargy.

"Her pulse returns, she is saved !" I heard Dr. Quintil say. "Do not disturb her, madam ; be perfectly composed. I will return promptly with further remedies."

My grandmother obeyed him, checking her intention evidently of advancing to me, and returning to her chair ; and a conversation, perhaps interrupted by his presence, was, after he left the room, resumed between the speakers.

"It shall not be repeated," I heard my grandfather say, in his clear and tremulous tones. "Do not deprive me, madam, of my greatest consolation. I promise you it shall never be repeated."

He spoke as a penitential child might plead. Her reply was sad and stern.

"If I could be sure of this, Erastus—if I could be sure ; but

that fearful inclination to gamble with life is so strong with you. How do I know at what moment my child's life might be the sacrifice of one of your experiments? Remember poor Jasper."

"This is a different case," he rejoined sharply. "It appertains to my own blood. This is my daughter's child, her representative, more sacred to me than my own life, or yours even. What was Jasper to me beyond the worm that crawls? What could he ever have been? What blood of mine flowed through his shallow veins?"

How his words thrilled me, lying there bound, as with invisible cords, helpless, yet sensible to all that passed.

"It will not do, Camilla," he continued, "even under circumstances like these, to refer to him. This child is mine. She has proved her courage and her confidence in me, as no other being has ever done, and I would perish a thousand times before I would harm one hair of her noble and devoted head. I did not dream that the potion she swallowed could have effects like these. It acts so differently on my system."

"Erastus, it is destroying you, as surely as alcohol ever killed the habitual dram-drinker, or opium its miserable victim. What properties it possesses in common with these I know not, but I feel that death is in the draught. Think, too, of its wild extravagance! A thousand guineas a year consumed to make this drug of destruction! What would not this money effect? Laid aside, it would afford our grand-daughter a marriage portion, or, put into active use, convert these worn lands into fertile grain-fields, drain yon village, so often decimated by epidemic, and give health and occupation to its inhabitants. Given in alms even, what might it not effect? Think of results like these! Erastus,

I must speak to you, painful as it is to both, and silent as I have been too long. I must remind you of your accountability to God and man, and your fearful profligacy in thus destroying your substance, and that of your family."

"You depart, madam," he answered coldly, "from your long established generosity of conduct, in reproaching thus the captive in your hands. My life is in your power. I have placed it there. You can, any day, by a sign, a word, get rid of the spendthrift, and enjoy his fortune. Nay, without this painful alternative, for such I flatter myself it would be, even to you, it can be commanded to flow into other channels, and the world will be none the wiser. The bequest was made long since that rendered it legally yours ; and as for me, is not my name written on a tombstone?"

He spoke with an earnest pathos now.

"She moves," she said, "she revives ; she will overhear you. One word more, Erastus. My, our child must not be tampered with again. She comes to you no more, save with the protection of my presence."

"Madam, forbear !" he murmured between his set teeth. "Tampered with—the words are severe."

"They are the words for the occasion," she retorted sternly ; "and my decision is taken. Move it who may !"

"Camilla, for God's sake, be merciful !"

He laid his hand on her arm imploringly. She shook it off, as though a reptile had touched her, with an expression of ghastly loathing. I saw all this as I lay, helpless, yet perfectly composed, on a sofa. And now, meeting my eye, she came to me, and bending over me tenderly, kissed my cheek, my brow, bathing my face literally with her tears, murmuring low words of caressing affection

Dr. Quintil returned a moment later with remedies he had been delayed in finding, and which soon enabled me to rise and seek my apartment, with the aid of his arm, yielding, as they did, a temporary relief.

My grandfather had thrown himself into a deep chair, and sat with his face averted. I was too weak to speak to him ; but as Fabius opened the door for us to pass out to the stairs, I whispered to him, " Say that I will return to-morrow."

He shook his head significantly at these words, with an ominous gravity, I thought ; but this made little impression on me at the time.

" I have a right to visit my grandfather, when and where I please," I thought, " an inalienable right which my grandmother will be the first to recognize, when her anger is over. She knows he never meant to harm me, and it was my own fault if I would encounter a new sensation. But Jasper ! What meant this allusion to Jasper ? Alas, was it through him those poor lips were sealed in muteness ? No, no, I will not believe this thing. What more ? No child of his ? Of whom, then ? Hers, surely ! Oh ! terrible, terrible uncertainty ; down, down, suspicion !"

Lying on my couch, in the weakness consequent on this wild experiment, I tortured myself with questionings like these. Excessive languor and debility were with me the successors of my draught of life, and I lay extended, almost helplessly, on a sofa in my grandmother's chamber, for nearly a week after I left the sealed apartments.

While still unable to join the family at the table, Fabius brought me on one occasion, owing to some indisposition on Bianca's part, the strawberries, which were the only food I craved, from the dessert, and took the opportunity to restore me

the duplicate key of the secret door, which he had found, he said, on the floor of the rotunda, after we came downstairs. I had not missed my key before, and somewhat conscience-stricken by my own carelessness, received it silently. The old man lingered, as if expecting some remark.

"I shall soon be able to return to the sealed apartments. I am so glad to have this," I said. "Tell my grandfather I am only a little weak ; and give him my love, Fabius."

"He sends you his, Miss Lilian, and hopes you will never forget him."

"Forget him ! Oh, tell him not to dream of such a thing ; but never mind. I will tell him this and much more to-morrow in person," I said, rising on the couch. "See, I am almost restored. Tell him this, Fabius, it will comfort him. Say that you saw me sitting up."

The old man shook his head.

"You will not come back again, Miss Lilian ; they will not permit you. My master thinks so at any rate, and he is very low indeed about it."

"But I will return, I tell you. No one has a right to prevent me this. No one can."

Again he shook his head, and laying his finger on his lip, looked at me significantly, lifted his eyes mournfully to heaven, and left me—bearing off the scarce tasted strawberries—in a condition of mingled excitement and bewilderment. I cast myself back on the couch quite overcome.

"This is too bad," I thought. "I will speak seriously to my grandmother on this subject ; but no. It is but a figment of the old man's scheming brain. What a conspirator was lost in him !"



As I lay listlessly turning the key in my fingers, and revolving the words of Fabius at the same time, I perceived between me and the light, that the wards were full of white matter, which I found on examination to be wax. I thought little of this at the time, engaged as I was with other considerations; but this trifling circumstance furnished later a clue to an occurrence which might otherwise have seemed mysterious and even inexplicable.

I had just removed the encumbering substance, and was about to place the key in my pocket, when my grandmother entered. Her quick glance rested on it at once, and she extended her hand for it.

"It is just what I want, Lilian, that duplicate key. You have no further use for it, and I will take it into custody again."

"Grandmother," I said, as I gave it into her hands, "I think you might have left this matter as it stood. I see no reason why free access to my grandfather's apartments should be denied me now more than before. It was my own will to drink the elixir. This shall not be repeated."

"He has abused sacred confidence in tampering with your safety as he has done. This cannot be reposed in him again, without throwing a weight of responsibility on me that I am unwilling to incur. Yet I by no means object to your visits to his chambers, when made in my society or that of Dr. Quintil."

"Grandmother, I would so much rather go to him alone. I have heard you say myself, that no conversation was ever spontaneous between more than two. These visits are so delightful to me, to him; and as for the elixir, I promise you to taste nothing from his hands, if that will satisfy you. Restore me my key, and take off your interdict!"

Her brow darkened.

"My decision is taken," she replied. "Lilian, say no more. You can never see him again without the presence of witnesses."

"Fabius is always there," I persisted. "I have never been alone with him more than a few minutes at a time, since I first went to him; and by sign and gesture the old man tried to dissuade me from tasting the medicine. It was but an error of judgment on my grandfather's part, but a piece of defiance on mine, to say the most of it. Oh! grandmother, revoke your decision. Have pity on his loneliness."

"Pity!" she said, while a stern, sad smile passed over her noble features, leaving them again cold and inflexible. "You have spoken well! Pity has always been a master passion with me, a master weakness even. What other bond do you suppose can now exist between me and the man you plead for? You are infatuated, Lilian!"

"I had given you credit for deeper feelings," I said, coldly, in my turn. "When I saw you ministering to his pleasure in every way, even to change of dress, adorning yourself as you do for his eye only, I supposed there might still be some holy regard lingering around the wreck of years. But I see it now. All this is alms, grandmother; and this is why my presence is so dear to him, so invaluable—why it must not be denied to him."

"Alms!" she repeated. "That is a strange conceit of yours; yet perhaps you are right. Compassionate attention is but alms after all. This feeling leads me to surround his limited life with what enjoyment I can afford him. It is a whim with him to like to see me wear the dresses he once admired. It costs me little pains to put them on to please him. I do this as a matter of principle.

The changes of fashion are nothing to a prisoner, fastidious though he be, therefore they need no renewing. But there is one dress he shall never see me wear, dearer than all beside," she murmured.

"No more of this," she added impatiently. The matter is concluded. Let it rest! Dark thoughts come in troops to me to-day. Would that I could drive them aside thus, at once and forever. But no, this cannot be. Father, thy will be done!"

As she spoke these words, murmuring the last, she threw out her arms with a sudden effort, as if repelling the assaults of material rather than mental foes; then clasping her hands, she raised them first to heaven, and afterward bowed her head upon them, so clasped, as if wrapped in internal supplication, remaining mute some moments and standing perfectly immovable.

I can give no idea by a mere description, of the grandeur and significance of this gesture, nor of the impression it made on me of mingled dignity and submission. It stirred me powerfully.

"Grandmother," I said, bursting through the reserve habitual to our intercourse, in the strong impulse of the moment, "tell me. I conjure you, whence come these dark thoughts that you drive aside like fiends, yet bow before like gods? What is this sorrow that devours you, and corrodes the existence of all who surround you? Tell me—I have a right to know. I am young, I am strong, I am of your blood. Let me share your burden."

"Peace, Lilian, peace!" she said, laying her hands tenderly on my head, now bowed before her. "Be dutiful, be obedient, be patient. Rest in the enjoyment of such ignorance as remains to you, and respect the sanctity of my grief. Were I to lift the curtain that hides the past, you would wish it dropped again."

"It may be ; and yet I am of a nature to prefer certainty to doubt, under most circumstances ; but there are some sick misgivings now at work in my veins," I said, gloomily, "that would make any explanation merciful."

"Has he dared to malign me?" She spoke with quivering lip, and flashing eyes. "Speak ! tell me the truth !"

"No, no !—indeed he has not," I hastened to reply. "He has never spoken one word to injure or detract from you, grandmother. In his very schemes of fortune, he makes you his first object. He idolizes you—I am sure of that. It is you who fatally misunderstand"—

"Fatally *understand* him, you mean," she interrupted, with an almost mocking calmness. "Pass over that assurance, if you please ; and, as to his schemes of fortune, I give you my word, that could these dreams be realized, I would have no part in them. His sorrow, his wretchedness, his degradation, I partake, partly from the nature of circumstances, partly from a spirit of self-sacrifice, that is the best part of my defective character, I believe—imbecility, he would call it, probably ; but his prosperity, his enjoyment, I reject utterly. I have eaten with him the bitter bread of life—its caters would choke me ! But, to the point. What occasions those misgivings to which you refer, and which seem of recent date ? Explain, explain !"

She spoke with an impatient bitterness unusual with her. I hesitated a moment ; then, nerving myself, answered her in low, tremulous tones, at first, that deepened as emotion governed me.

"Words, grandmother, that were dropped when you thought me unconscious ; words from the lips of both my parents—if such indeed you are—significant, terrible words !"

"Child, you are dreaming ! What doubts, what fancies, pos-

sess you now? I can recall nothing of the kind ; this must have been a delusion created by the drug."

"No, I heard them distinctly. Jasper was spoken of—my Uncle Jasper, as I have been taught to call him ; and his father—or he I had thought his father—disclaimed him with scorn. 'No blood of mine flows in his shallow veins !' were the very words he uttered, and you did not repel the calumny, grandmother, if such it was. What does this mean?"

"Jasper is not your grandfather's son, Lilian," she said, collecting herself with a strong effort, for she was evidently much affected. "His father was perfection ; how think you such a flower could grow from the upas-tree that shadows us?"

I started, and, covering my face with my hands, burst into tears.

"Shame, through you, grandmother ! I had not looked for this !" I murmured.

"Nor is he *mine* !" she continued, taking down my hands, and gazing into my face with her large earnest eyes. "It is time that you should know this, now that it can no longer influence you. Nor is he mine, Lilian, save by adoption. His mother was an angel, I have been told. He sprang from perfect natures on both sides, very different from those you came from, my poor Lilian ! It is easy for him to be faultless, but you"—

"Oh, grandmother," I interrupted, "you have made me so happy !" My arms were around her neck, my face covered with confusion, hidden on her shoulder. "Forgive me," I faltered, "that I dared to doubt you."

She was silent for a time, and I felt her breast heaving against mine with a storm of mute emotion, which soon subsided, for in a few moments she said to me, in her usual clear and cheerful voice :

"Look up, my love—look up, and take a lesson from my face, never to be forgotten. Learn better from this hour to read that only certain index to the human heart, the human countenance. Whenever you see eyes directed toward you, clear, steady, proud, honest, true, as all that run may read mine to be, believe that no guilt harbors within, and that however errors of judgment or passion may have disturbed the soul that looks out from such windows, those of craft, perfidy, or shame have never been included. Believe this, Lilian, whatever others may tell you ; and now make haste, and get your strength, for we are wanted upstairs, and we must go together."

Then with that strange versatility of manner which might have been derived from the necessities of her position, or was, perhaps, a natural and providential gift in her case, she turned to me with a smile, and the careless observation :

"I hope, my love, you enjoyed your strawberries. They were the finest I have seen this year."

## CHAPTER II.

HAPPY ! yes. I had told my grandmother that her revelation had made me happy, and at first I believed this assertion ; but later I felt that this new and perfect recognition of Jasper's attitude toward me was cause of endless sorrow. The feelings so long restrained by a sense of propriety and right, now rushed back to their old place, like dammed waters freed from obstruction, after being forced into a false channel ; and, day by day, my heart shrank more and more from the task that lay before it.

My grandmother did not suspect this. An engagement so positive as mine was now known to be, seemed little short of marriage itself with her. She was one of those favored mortals who can govern and direct their feelings, and even thoughts. My nature was more impulsive, less under the dominion of reason and of duty than her own—ininitely less perfect. Yet the whole falseness and pain of my position were not forced upon me until Jasper returned.

Owing to circumstances, my summer plans, made so confidently when travelling the year before with Everard Howe, had been wholly changed. It was determined that I should remain quietly at home, engaged, during the months I had set apart for a tour among the lakes, in those preparations all women love to make when about to confer hand and heart together—so inexpressibly painful to me ! In September, Jasper was to return. In October, I was to be married. Such were our present plans.

It was observed by the whole household of Bouverie, that I grew pale and listless as spring deepened into summer ; and, with

the determined blindness of those who will not see, they attributed this to natural anxiety on my part at the approach of so important an event in my life, and concern at the inevitable separation that lay before me from all I had loved so long.

My grandmother busied herself, with Bianca's assistance, in making up rolls of fine linen and muslin for my benefit. Piles of beautiful old laces and embroidery were brought from their hiding-places of years, to embellish these ; patterns from distant cities, purchased or solicited through the proper mediums ; and an arrangement made, conditionally, with a distant milliner of undoubted taste, to supply the whole bridal trousseau in autumn, at Dr. Quintil's expense.

People that have few wants can afford to be so generous. The man that smoked a pipe for economy, did not hesitate to send *carte blanche* to this accomplished modiste, when my pleasure and his pride were concerned. "We cannot aim at jewels," he said ; "you will find enough of those in England, I suppose, among family trophies ; but, if a year's income will give you a suitable outfit, you shall have it, Lilian, and a thousand dollars beside, that I have put aside in gold from time to time—a sort of caprice of mine, that I am glad of now, since it will fill your purse for pin-money to begin with."

How could I bear to damp their evident pleasure by any show of discontent ? I tried to subdue all symptoms of this kind. I forced myself to manifest interest, when my heart lay like a stone in my bosom. I was like a poor actress I once saw smiling on the stage, when her baby lay dying at home. We were stopping at the same hotel in adjoining rooms, and came back almost at the same moment to our chambers. I remember the peculiar elation of spirits her acting caused. She was a comedian.



Oh, the sobbing anguish of that night to her ! Oh, the wild shriek at daylight that told me all was over !

It was a merciful relief to me to be alone, and so I missed free access to my grandfather's society less than I would have done a few months before. My fate was narrowing around me. There was no outlet for escape it seemed to me, no comfort in complaint, no recourse from the inevitable. I postponed the communication that my grandmother left it for me to make to our beloved prisoner, and which I had been desirous of doing long ago, it may be remembered, on many pretences.

It would do as well to broach the subject in August, I averred, as we had put it off so long ; he was not strong ; the heat began to oppress his delicate frame with unwonted languor, or some other cause less manifest, was doing its work with him. In truth, although he never once alluded to the ban which had been placed on our intercourse, nor relaxed in the cordial courtesy of his manner to those who had established this interdict, I thought I could see a slow, physical change passing across him, as over a plant that droops for the want of some proper element of soil to which it has been accustomed.

"It is providential perhaps," I thought, "that he is prepared in this way for our final separation. It will fall less crushingly upon him, after passing the ordeal of gradual estrangement. I will postpone the final pain, however, as long as possible." Nor could my grandmother shake my resolution on this point.

I never heard the fires roaring above my head during that summer, and ascertained that his few experiments, all tending to one great purpose, were chiefly performed now in that chemical range I had noticed on the night of my first visit to his apartments, lately rendered more complete by additions.

To these occupations he never alluded now.

Literature was oftenest his theme, and his eloquent voice was lifted in praise of his favorite authors, or in scathing criticism levelled against those he scorned or disliked, and these were legion! He had the art of detecting and hitting all vulnerable points. His Paris arrow was always on the string, and he would strip away the lion's skin or the peacock's plumes from the disguised ass or jackdaw, with ferocious delight that withered what it revealed.

It pained me sometimes to have fond delusions of mine dispelled in this sudden way; but wherever my taste or inclination were deeply rooted, he tried, in vain, to remove them—and thus I learned to separate the real from the false in my own intellect.

His prejudice against American literature was intense, oftenest unjust, for many of our great writers were in their zenith then, and it did me good occasionally to break a lance for them. My grandmother seemed much amused at these rencontres. It was only during these playful skirmishes that she relaxed in the severity and gravity of her manner toward him, and seemed to forget the past. And he basked in her transient obliviousness of sorrow, as our poor Merodach had done in the sunshine of the skylight.

His summer sitting-room was the pleasant circular hall, of which I have so often spoken, every avenue of approach to which was so strictly guarded from below, as to give him that sense of security necessary to all enjoyment. It was here that we usually found him sitting immediately below the skylight, left open for the admission of light and air, and glaring down upon him like a great, ever watchful eye.

It was here that he read, ate, talked, walked, lived almost; drinking in the hottest rays of sunshine, or revelling in the milder light of moon and stars with equal pleasure. I recollect his almost childish delight one night when "Orion" and "Aldebaran" appeared immediately above his limited circle of observation. His frame trembled with its intense excitement.

"No wonder the Chaldeans worshipped them," he said; "they are divine;" then breaking into involuntary prayer, he cried, "If ever I live again, O God, let it be in one of these!"

The veriest hind could go forth each night and gaze on heaven's magnificence unrestrained; he with his kingly intellect rejoiced in glimpses of that glorious firmament alone, whose expanse was shut away from him forever. The meanest slave could rove through wood and field when his task was done; he who had commanded men so long must hide from them now in this narrow sphere of stagnant routine; his "great, round world," as he called it, in that strange spirit of mocking gaiety that affected me more than any mood of complaint or repining on his part could have done.

Whatever the errors may have been that consigned him to its limits, he bore with unfaltering courage and cheerfulness their penalty. Complaint was a stranger to his lips, and he made the best of his position, rendered infinitely more pathetic in my eyes by such determined patience. The greater part of his life was spent in solitude, necessarily; and there must have been times, I think, of fierce and almost overwhelming agony to a nature proud and implacable as his own, when he reviewed the past, the vanished "might have been," and then surveyed the present. Putting aside remorse, of which some persons believed him incapable, the sacrifice of worldly prospects, of freedom, social intercourse, and

family affection, and the dark heritage of shame and sorrow he must leave to his posterity, were enough to crush, to almost madden him. Even had these been supportable, the stagnation, the wearing monotony of his existence, to which his burning imagination only added self-torment, must have been infinitely depressing and crushing, physically as well as mentally. The very luxury of his life was only calculated to enervate and destroy him ; and his hopelessness of any change for the better, was perhaps the worst feature of all. For temporally or eternally the nature of his suffering seemed fixed and unchangeable. These considerations added strength and tenderness to my affection, my idolatry almost for him ; and had he stood forth in the world, the centre of society, the most admired of men, I never could have revered or loved him so profoundly, as from the deep, yearning pity that filled my bosom.

In feelings like these I often lost sight for a season of my own position, and the poignancy of my peculiar sensations would grow dull and vague, as the bitter sting of his condition glanced to my heart. "Must this always continue?" I thought ; "is there no leniency in law, no end to punishment. There are terms even in penitentiaries, which, once served out, entitle the prisoner to freedom. Was our prisoner in for life ? Alas ! alas !"

With the end of June came Jasper ! He stood before me suddenly, unexpectedly, one evening, as we sat together on the lawn, before my grandmother's great bow-window. He had dismissed the conveyance that brought him from Crofton at the stone gate, and walked quietly up to the mansion unobserved.

I pass over the rapture of that meeting. Almost all persons have known, once at least in life, such sensations as moved us then ; and to those who have never experienced such, no words of

mine could convey them. For these unfortunates, let us persuade ourselves, heaven preserves some such joyful recognition of kindred spirits, as a compensation for a life of vacancy and monotony here below.

Little was said at first. Tears, smiles, embraces, spoke the fittest language for the occasion, but we surveyed him from head to foot, again and again, as he stood before us, strengthened, improved ; walking now without the aid of cane or crutch, and, as ever, nobly beautiful.

Dr. Quintil's first remark was characteristic of the philosophy of his life. He had been, I think, more affected by Jasper's sudden appearance than any of us. He was so silent, so agitated, for a time, that it distressed me to look at him ; at last, struggle as he would, tears came to his relief, and flowed freely down his face.

Wiping these away suddenly, and even impatiently, with his banner-like handkerchief—did you ever observe, dear reader, that almost all great-hearted men carry these flags in their pockets, whether of silk or linen, ready to be unfurled on all occasions ?—he inquired, in a lachrymose and broken voice :

“Where is your baggage, Jasper ?”

I could but smile, and I saw the suppressed amusement in Jasper's eye, at the practical inquiry made in such mournful tones. My grandmother laughed out her merry, cordial laugh, so seldom heard, but always so contagious.

“At Crofton, uncle ; I brought nothing with me but a hand-bag,” signified Jasper.

Dr. Quintil was either unobservant of, or totally indifferent to, our merriment at his expense.

“I will go at once,” he added, in his weeping voice, so signally at variance with the subject, “and send Smith with the cart to

fetch it. My dear boy, I am so glad to see you—so grown, too, so improved ; straight as an arrow, now ; only one thing wanting—well, well, it can't be helped."

He had thrown his arm over Jasper's shoulder, as he spoke, and I saw that the difference that had once existed in their height was greatly diminished.

Straining him again to his breast—a thing he had done half a dozen times before—he broke away at last, and went rapidly forth on his errand ; and a few moments later my grandmother passed into the house to hasten supper—always a late meal with us—for the benefit of her restored wanderer.

It is a common superstition of hospitable people that all who arrive from a distance are in a starving condition, and must perish if not immediately sustained by food. Jasper had come from Italy, therefore was hungry—the inference being that he had eaten nothing on the way. Strange logic, in these days of hotel and steamboat abundance, and roadside feasting, and ocean palaces.

For the interval of half an hour, we were alone. During this time I was conscious of talking on in a rapid, excited way ; asking questions—never answered, of course, since it was too dark for tablets—and feeling, rather than seeing, Jasper's grave, reproachful eyes, as I knew they were fixed upon me, in the dim summer twilight. It was a relief to both, I believe—I know it was to me—when supper was announced, and we went in to the cheerful, well-arranged table where frugality was made to resemble luxury, by the aid of taste and care.

To the simple grace he always said at meals, Dr. Quintil added to-night a devout thanksgiving for the safe return of one dear, long-absent member of the household of Bouverie, to which all hearts, if not all lips, responded a deep Amen !

## CHAPTER III.

Two weeks from the day of Jasper's arrival, I glided into my grandmother's room, and laid an unsealed letter before her.

"You will oblige me by reading this, dear grandmother, at your leisure," I said, "and judging of its propriety."

"It is to Everard Howe," she observed, returning it to me; "this form is no longer necessary, my love. I have every confidence in your discretion, and the relations between you are so decided now, that in future I decline this office, which"—

"Grandmother, you *must* read this letter," I interrupted, a little sternly, perhaps. "It contains an important decision."

"What do you mean?" she asked, rising from her seat, as she spoke, and laying her hand firmly on my arm, while she peered into my face. I trembled in her grasp, and felt my resolution forsaking me. I was conscious of turning very pale.

"A glass of water, if you please, for Miss de Courcy," she said, loftily, to Bianca, who crossed the floor at that moment. "Sit down; be composed, I pray you. This decision!—explain it to me yourself. I—I cannot read that letter now."

She was pale and agitated; her grasp relaxed, she turned away from me, and mutely wrung her hands. This action, which she strove to conceal, affected me deeply. I saw her whole heart was set upon this union, so important, as she considered it, for my welfare. I saw what agony her apprehensions occasioned her—I dreaded the effect of their confirmation.

I drank the water Bianca brought to me in silence, waited until

she retired, then spoke with sudden determination, and with exceeding pain.

"Grandmother, you understand me, I think. I am about to break my engagement with Sir Everard Howe."

She did not reply, but her large dilating eye measured me from head to foot, and her nostrils quivered with scorn. Presently the proud lip, so sternly compressed until now, rose in a wreathing smile of bitter disdain.

"Truly," she said, in freezing accents, "the Greek proverb spoke well, when it said, 'Those whom the gods seek to destroy, they first make mad!' Girl, you are insane! You are rushing on destruction."

She hesitated, surveying me sternly, perhaps waiting for a reply, or reading me like an open book, as I sat panting before her—partly frightened, partly indignant, as I was.

"I suppose Jasper is at the bottom of this change," she added, bitterly. "Poor foolish children, I pity you!"

"Jasper has influenced me in no way to make me change my decision," I replied, in low accents, speaking like one in a dream, almost; "I am acting from my own judgment alone, for our mutual happiness."

"Why was not this thought of before he returned, if this be true? Why does his presence here occasion this sudden, this unexpected change?"

"Because I see how unhappy he is, and I know I have made him so."

"And is this all?"

"All! grandmother? A great deal, I think. Happiness is a very sacred thing."

"And so are obligations, Lilian! Have you never thought of



this? Sir Everard Howe holds your solemn promise—your troth. His happiness, too, is at stake.”

“I know—I know!” I said passionately, covering my face with my hands, and sobbing aloud. “I have done very wrong. I am wretched, penitent, humiliated, to death. I would strew ashes on my head, creep on my knees before him, do anything in my power to atone for the wrong I have done him ; but, I cannot add to it, grandmother, by marrying him, with a heart wholly given to another.”

“This is the first time I have ever heard such a confession from a woman’s lips, who was not either married, or engaged to, its object,” she said, turning coldly away. “It shocks me ; it is unmaidenly—immodest, even.”

I crimsoned to the temples.

“Grandmother,” I made answer, “I can bear your scorn, your reproaches, but not insult, injustice, like this—I do not deserve it,” and I felt that my eyes flashed fire. “Never have I been unmaidenly in thought or deed ; but oh, it seems to me, that no act could be half so unseemly, so unwomanly, as to—yes, grandmother, I must speak out, whatever you may think about decorum—as to lie in the bosom of a man who is not beloved. I am not the shameless hypocrite to do this thing.”

“You have been long in arriving at this conclusion,” she remarked, with biting scorn.

“It has been, indeed, a long time since the struggle began ; but it is over now,” I said. “Almost from the moment of making that engagement, I felt the pressure of the chain that bound me too galling, too unendurable, to be borne. Of late, it seems to have eaten into my very flesh—it cankers there. I must throw it off, or perish—I must, indeed, grandmother ! And Jasper !—it

has only been lately, you know, that the truth with regard to our relationship has been fully revealed to me. Before that, it seemed sinful to love him, even in uncertainty, for some words of his had long awakened a dim suspicion, a dim hope, even in my mind, that no blood flowed between us."

She caught at the hasty expression, which so imperfectly expressed what I meant to say.

"Blood!" she reiterated, "yes, rivers of blood—such blood! Oh, God!" and she leaned her pallid brow, now covered with cold dew, forward on her quivering hands, supporting these in turn on the low table before her, so that her face was invisible to me. "How can I tell you what blood, Lilian?" There was a long, oppressive silence.

At last she looked up, grave, stern, composed; pale as marble, save where two crimson spots flickered on her cheeks, like candles on some cold, grey altar-stone, and speaking in accents of deepest agony, in a few low, sorrowful words, she made her revelation.

Then first I knew what "ban of blood," as Bishop Clare had called it, rose between us. Then first I heard the true name of him I loved, and the circumstances that had thrown his life into the precincts of Bouverie. Then first was revealed to me why my grandfather was an eternal prisoner in those sealed apartments; and why barriers of ice shut him away forever from the affections of his wife, and him she called her son.

Oh! woeful revelation—half-suspected before—how crushing was your confirmation of all I dreaded, yet long refused to believe!

For a time, I staggered blindly beneath the burden I had assumed; for a time, I tacitly acquiesced in the justice of my grandmother's parting words to me, on the occasion of that bitter interview:

"Lillian, you see clearly now why it is that you can never marry Jasper, or be more to him than you are."

But never, for one moment, did I lose sight of the determination which a clear insight into my own feelings had given rise to; and, without a hope for the future, I threw off the brilliant prospect of honor and distinction my proposed union brought with it. I sealed and directed my letter to Sir Everard Howe that day. It would meet him in August, at Taunton Tower, I knew; and it was inclosed to the care of Colonel Reginald de Courcy.

## CHAPTER IV.

As winter comes to the earth binding and controlling its softer influences in chains of ice, so there comes at times to the human heart a cold and chilling season—a suspension, rather than a leath, of impulse, more strengthening than depressing in the end ; yet full of pain and sorrowful endurance while it prevails. Such was the mood that possessed my being, for a time, after the severing of the tie that had bound me.

Yet, on the whole, I was content with what I had done—content, despite my grandmother's cold and altered brow and manner, and the knowledge that I could never be, with her consent or approbation, the wife of Jasper—content, in the consciousness of my own redeemed integrity

To dwell alone, even though enshrined in that strangely stricken household, still in one sense alone ; or, at best, to float on the outskirts of life, like a dim cloud on the horizon's verge, which shadows the plain below, yet has no part in it ; such seemed my doom ! Yet better this, than a life of hypocrisy and regret—perhaps remorse ; better this, than deceit, defiance, or despair, each growing out of the other by irresistible consequences !

In the crushing and chilling of my affections, I avoided every one—Jasper, most of all. He knew nothing of what had passed. I saw, by his glance, that he missed the sparkling ring from my finger, worn frequently in his presence when he first returned—laid aside now forever—with the miniature encircled by brilliants, with the Indian shells and shawls, the unstrung pearls, and the

exquisite fans of carved ivory and nacrework, that from time to time Everard Howe had sent to me from abroad.

The case of sandal-wood that contained these articles was kept in waiting for an opportunity to return them to his hand. I would keep nothing to remind me of my fault—nothing, not even his letters, pleasant as these were to read, and free from that love-sick vein which to me would have made them intolerable. I knew that Jasper suffered, and that he misconceived the cause of my coolness—my reticence toward him. His speaking eyes were turned on me sometimes in mute and surprised questioning, then dropped again, as in despair of fathoming the truth beneath their long, dark lashes.

At last he went away. His pictures had arrived in New York, and he would go there, he said, to finish, to retouch them, to hang them in some gallery where they might be seen and known, and perhaps find purchasers. Whatever occurred, he would bring them to Bouverie finally, that those he loved best might see them before he parted with them forever ; and certainly he would return in October at furthest.

I understood the allusion as it flashed from his fingers, and smiled bitterly. Yet I made him no explanation of my changed views. I told no one what I had done. My grandmother and Dr. Quintil might think what they would ; until interrogated by them, I would give them no satisfaction.

Some days passed before Dr. Quintil made any allusion to the past, and then it was to hold up a letter before me, directed, like my own, to "Everard Howe."

"Do you object to this?" he said.

"What have I to do with your correspondence?" I answered, almost bitterly.

"Then, Lilian, I am to understand that all is really over?"

I thought the expression of his face did not indicate displeasure.

"I am going to write to Madame La Trobe to-day, to send me none of the articles you ordered so generously. I shall never want them now," I answered evasively.

"Do as you please, you are the best judge," he said. "It is true those who dwell in convents have little cause for fashion. Serge and lawn are all you require in penitential houses."

And so I wrote—so closely does the commonplace tread on the heels of sentiment in this prosaic world of ours—to a milliner, as my only confidant in this my change of arrangements, for of course she comprehended this immediately, and I received before long her remonstrative reply. Some of the articles, she said, most costly and *recherché*, were on their way from Europe, among others a superb dress of white Brussels lace. What should be done under these circumstances?

I answered, "Let them be sold if possible; if not, they will be paid for. There will be a settlement of some kind on the first of October. Wait till then. If the worst comes," I thought, "I will sell the jewel my grandfather made from my poor, crushed cross, and so wipe out the debt."

Fortunately for my quiet, as far as my grandmother was concerned, Fabius handed me the post-bag to open on the day that Madame La Trobe's letter arrived. I was alone in the dining-room at the time, and, having quietly read it, committed it to the fire, merely to avoid discussion. There was certainly no other cause for concealment in such a correspondence. And having answered it, the matter ended for the time.

Two months rolled slowly away. A great restraint rested over

us all. I felt its presence in my intercourse with every member of the household of Bouverie, with my grandmother, with Dr. Quintil, with my grandfather even ; for, as I said before, winter was in my heart, and pervaded all things.

In August, Bishop Clare came, like a thaw in January, breaking up the icy bondage in one genial, rushing flood, and blending our frozen natures into one stream again. This was effected by no design of his, for he knew nothing of this new condition of things ; the impulse that brought us all together was of course nothing more than our affection for him.

Like one waking from a long, dull dream, from which it was joy to be released, I threw myself into his arms and wept, the first tears of months. My grandmother, too, gave way to feeling such as she had not exhibited for a long time, and Dr. Quintil's greeting was more earnest and fervent than usual.

The good father had cause to esteem his welcome more than usually cordial, if somewhat sad. Later he saw deeper into its source. He was a relief to our overcharged hearts, a safety-valve for feeling, a centre for reunion.

One day Bianca brought to my room a letter bearing a foreign postmark, that made my heart beat high. The writing, I thought at first, was that of Edith Howe ; but I felt that I must have been mistaken, since the caligraphy of brother and sister greatly resembled each other, when I tore open the envelope, and discovered my own letter within, on the back of which was written, carelessly, in pencil, in the same hand-writing, "Returned—unopened."

I sat for a few moments, holding it silently in my hands, at first lost in conjecture, at last crimson with indignation ; then opening it, I read it carefully, from beginning to end, twice over,

scanning as narrowly as I could, every expression, every assertion, and recalling with burning scorn, the feeling of deep humiliation under which it was written.

All this was over now. We stood on equal ground again.

"Everard Howe, you have relieved me by this insult from every feeling of regret or pain that might otherwise have haunted me through life," I murmured; "the mask has dropped away, I see you as you are!"

Reader, had I loved him, the feeling that inspired me might have been different. I might for a moment have reeled under the bitter blow, and felt the iron enter my soul. But in any case, to a nature like mine, the result must have been the same. Reaction must have brought disdain, indifference, contempt even. When a proud woman's self-respect is assailed, affection dies for him that deals the blow, whether he be friend or lover.

I rose, I paced the room. Indignant as I was, a burden still seemed lifted from my life. How I had suffered for that man, doomed by my own act to suffering! That cold, relentless anguish that for weeks, nay months, had clasped me in its bands of ice, was all for him! All this was at an end.

I smiled in the fullness of my contempt. I understood it all, it seemed to me. Good Dr. Quintil had gathered my intention, had written of it perhaps to Colonel de Courcy in a deprecating manner, or my grandmother even might have condescended to have done this in her earnest wish for what she deemed my welfare. The insinuation, or whatever it was, of such an inclination on my part, communicated to him by his relative, had fired the blood of Everard Howe. He had determined to strike the first blow, to throw me off rudely and forever. He had done this because, despite appearances and preconceived opinions, he was no gentleman.



I had arrived at this conclusion, when Bianca appeared at the door.

"Miss Lilian," she said, "dinner is waiting ; and here is a letter I dropped as I came across the hall awhile ago. Take it, but don't stay to read it now. Bishop Clare is so hungry, and your grandmother is strangely out of sorts to-day. You had better make haste, I think.

A glance at the letter revealed the large, clear characters, and foreign postmark, of Colonel de Courcy. Thrusting it in my pocket, with a sick loathing I could not repress, I followed her to the dining-room. There matters wore a gloomy aspect enough. Dr. Quintil was walking the room, as I entered, with unwonted agitation. My grandmother occupied her accustomed seat at the head of the table, with traces of recent tears on her face. Bishop Clare looked far more concerned than hungry, I thought. I, only, preserved an indifferent, almost a defiant air, and took my seat in quietness.

The meal passed in absolute silence, except when orders were given, or dishes offered. Never was anything so oppressive as this stillness. Like the thick darkness of Egypt, it seemed to me, it could almost be felt and grappled with.

The most empty and garrulous talker would have been a relief to me at that quiet table, where all eyes were fixed on me with an unmistakable expression of surprise and suspense.

"They think I have been justly served, I do not doubt," I thought as I met Dr. Quintil's deprecating glance ; "they are waiting for me to speak, evidently, but that I will never do, until they broach the subject. I will eat if it chokes me, if only to show them that I do not care for his insult, or their unmerited condemnation."

And so I compelled myself to swallow food, as a child takes medicine, gulpingly : for under all strong mental excitement the power of deglutition becomes difficult with some persons.

The weary meal was over at last. I thought Dr. Quintil would never tire peeling peaches for Bishop Clare, in whom an excessive repugnance existed against touching the furred skin of this fruit. I thought Bishop Clare would never cease to accept and eat them, although I could see that he did this mechanically, as one absorbed in thought.

At last we rose. The gentlemen went out to smoke or stroll ; Fabius busied himself with his cloth and glasses. My grandmother gravely requested me to follow her to her chamber. We were alone.

"Lilian !" she said, when she had seated herself in a great chair by the window, and pointed out to me the opposite seat, in a manner all her own, partly urbane, partly commanding, "Lilian, I scarcely recognize you in the peculiarity, the hardness of your late proceedings. I should think your own impulsive and ill-advised rupture of your engagement would, if nothing else affected you, make you feel this late occurrence. Instead of being softened by it, you seem utterly hard and defiant. Strange, strange girl, shall I ever understand you !"

"It is the first time, grandmother, that I ever heard it suggested that one might be softened by insult. Crushed, humiliated, yes ! To some natures this is possible ; but softened, never ! And as for me, nothing has so relieved me, so assuaged regret, as the conduct you advert to."

"What conduct, Lilian ? What do you mean ? Have you read Colonel de Courcy's letter ? Could anything be more kind, more considerate, more delicate even ?"—

"I have not read his letter, scarcely glanced at it," I interrupted. "I have it here," and I drew it from my pocket, and laid it on her knee. "Nor do I wish to read it. Take it back, I want no explanations, no glozing over, of an insult too gross, too palpable to be palliated. He had no right to reject my letter, until he knew its contents. The past alone should have preserved me from harshness, from ungentlemanly scorn like this. I have done nothing to deserve it."

"He? To whom do you refer, Lilian? Colonel de Courcy ought not to have read your letter certainly, nor should Edith Howe. Such a proceeding on the part of either would have been a breach of confidence, indelicate even under the circumstances, and you know"——

I interrupted her passionately, scarcely heeding her last words.

"To Everard Howe, grandmother. I refer to him. His hand has dealt this blow, though whence his warning came I shall never know, probably. Some change of mood, perhaps some insight into the real state of affairs in the upper floor of Bouverie, given maybe by the treacherous Smiths themselves—who knows? and after all, who cares, grandmother?"

"My child, my poor child! Can it be possible that you are in ignorance of the sad event? I thought you would understand at once, even without having read Colonel de Courcy's letter, what had occurred. Lilian, do you not know that Everard Howe is dead?"

The word fell on me like a slow, deep tocsin from a tolling bell. I rose to my feet, gazed earnestly into her face, turned, stretched my arms wildly to one who leaned in the open doorway with his sad eyes fixed on me, and falling on his breast as he advanced to meet me, fainted, for the first time in my life.

To swoon in the full strength of youth and health, is not the trifle that it seems to the old and delicate. With such as these, the temporary suspension of life makes little difference in its dull and stagnant stream. Admirable system of compensation that equalizes suffering as no other adjustment could have done !

I struggled back to life, as a strong swimmer gains the shore from deep water. Long before I gave evidence of returning consciousness, I felt the fierce endeavor of the surging blood and reeling brain within ; the hand of Nature slowly winding up the wheels of her powerful machine again.

I knew that they were all around me, all save one of that devoted household of Bouverie, and I felt that if that were indeed death, so strangely benumbing, and yet wrenching me with its dull, heavy throes, that its bitterness was wanting among such ministers. I knew that my grandmother bathed my brow, that Jasper chafed my hands, that Bianca knelt at my feet, that Bishop Clare and Dr. Quintil were bending above me. He only was wanting who would have felt my loss more than any of these in his desolate solitude.

I did not think at the moment of Everard Howe, or his mournful yet unexplained fate ; but as strength returned to me, this thought took entire possession of me, and all my injustice, scorn, and crushing coldness came surging back in waves of sorrow and remorse. Tears slid from my half-closed eyes, and my bosom heaved with sobs.

"She weeps," said Bishop Clare, "she is relieved. Be comforted, dearest Lilian. No human power can contend with fate."

"And his," murmured Dr. Quintil, "was fixed from the beginning of time."

"You, too, Camilla," said Bishop Clare, speaking in low, clear accents, "must yield your prejudice, your superstition to the decrees of Heaven. The hand of God is in this blow. Be reconciled to what remains."

She did not speak, but stooping softly down, she kissed my cheek, my brow; then laid my passive hand in that of Jasper. His lips were pressed to its surface, his hot tears bathed my fingers, closed tightly on his own. I did not speak nor move, but shutting my eyes again, gave up my soul to the fullness of its sorrowful yet ineffable joy.

In that moment of unspeakable happiness, a deep, prophetic vision seemed for a moment to shadow me as with visible wings. For one brief moment the unproved future stretched before my mental gaze, as in the mirage of the clairvoyant. I saw what Byron called a "mass of many images," confused at the time, but separated later, as each in turn met its fulfillment into clear and startling life scenes; and at the last I saw a pale woman, in widow's weeds, standing alone on the terrace of Bouverie, and I recognized in her face and form, a dim prophetic likeness to the girl called Lilian de Courcy, as she might appear when changed by time and sorrow. Ten years later how was the vision verified?

So, after all, this betrothal of Bouverie was a sad affair, worthy of its surroundings; having its origin in death, and basing its hopes on the power of love to conquer sin and shame. Blood must be washed away by faith and affection; and the grand word "atonement" carried out in its fullness by two frail mortal creatures, strong only in their trust and love for each other.

Yet it was without a single misgiving that I undertook my

portion of this task. That any curse could rest on our innocent affection from the guilty past, I did not believe or for a moment realize ; and yet, that there was a shadow to be removed from it, I saw with loving and hopeful eyes.

The Greeks poured libations to the unappeased manes of those who died by violence, and so quieted those restless ghosts. Might not we, by lives of piety and devotion, expiate the crime of one and the suffering of another, and make feeble amends for that noble and sacrificed life whose tide still swelled the veins of Jasper ? Might not we, with the blessing of God, pour such libations and aspire to do this thing ?

## CHAPTER V.

COLONEL DE COURCY's letter to me was a model of dignified propriety and consideration. I did him justice at last. My letter had reached Taunton Tower just before the sad news of Sir Everard Howe's sudden death arrived there ; sudden and violent, for he had been crushed by a fragment from an impending cliff (that had hung there since the creation, waiting, perhaps—who knows otherwise?—for him to pass beneath it before it fell), while taking a quiet evening stroll on the island of St. Helena.

His lifeless body, crushed to shapelessness, was removed with difficulty from beneath the mass that had so long overhung the quiet pathway he was tracing, when the sudden call for his soul was made, through its unexpected fall. Others that walked there in company with him were spared. One had lingered behind to pluck a flower—one straggled on before without a motive—so work the inscrutable decrees of fate !

Reader, believe me, when I tell you that I deplored the death of the man who had so generously offered to share his love, his prosperity with me, with tears as sincere and manifold as though he had been my brother. How cheerfully I would have welcomed the mortification of the returned letter, to know that he lived again ! How insignificant seemed this incident now, in view of the awful, changeless truth ! From whatever effect that letter of mine might have exerted over his feelings, he was spared at least by this untimely death. He died, believing, trusting in my affection ; and those that loved and honored him, still trusted in it, and in me. My heart was wrung by the letter of Edith Howe, in

which she poured forth on me, as from the floodgates of her sorrow, all her reliance, her confiding sympathy. My determination was taken then, painful as was the task, to undeceive those relatives who claimed me still as a sacred portion of their dead.

Colonel de Courcy's generous offer to settle a provision on me as the *widow* of his ward, had been declined, of course, as was simply right and natural, with gratitude not unmixed with pride. But this greater obligation of sisterly tenderness, could not be so treated. I had no right to receive it on such grounds ; and so, sending back the box of sandal-wood to Edith Howe, with all its precious contents, I wrote the accompanying letter :

“ BELOVED EDITH—

“ For such you must always be to me, not only for the sake of the friend who is gone, but from the confidence, the frankness, the affection, with which you have treated me from first to last—I send you back this box, because my conscience tells me it justly belongs to you. You will be surprised when you examine its contents, and find among them the ring of troth, the miniature your brother gave me, with many of his valued and interesting letters. You will say, ‘ Surely these are justly the property of her who was plighted to him as his betrothed wife. What whim is this that possesses her ? ’ Bear with me, dear Edith, and you shall know that I am impelled by no caprice to return these things, but from a deeper movement of my soul, that urges truth and honor as primal duties. Before I heard of your brother's death—months before—I had made up my mind to surrender all claims on his affections ; and the letter you returned to me conveyed to him my regretful determination.

“ Its causes I cannot tell you now, but certainly they had no



root in any fault of his. Time may, or may not, manifest to you some of these. All are in God's keeping ! But this much understand. I find myself so bound up in this mournful household of Bouverie, that I cannot any more break through the bands that bind me in its midst, than can a prisoner through his fetters.

"Yet the chains that hold me here are light and loving, flexible as strong ; made up of affection, of respect, of sympathy, of deep pity, even—of all that restrains and binds the human heart most closely, and makes it more than death to sever them. We lead a solitary life. It would be as ungenerous for me to separate my fate from theirs I dwell among, as for a member of a ship's company, lying becalmed in some desolate sea, to take the life-boat, and flee away in search of shore and cheerful companionship. If I ever entertained it, I have abandoned all such idea now. My fate compels me here, and I abide its issue.

"Yet, if you feel, sweet Edith, that I have not forfeited all claims on your friendship by this confession, continue to write to me. Your letters will be a solace to my loneliness, and in informing me of your happiness increase my own.

"For crushing as is your sorrow now, you will still be happy. Life lies before you, fair and beautiful, as a great plain, above the horizon of which the sun has just risen. A cloud is passing now across its disc ; but this will fleet away, and the golden glory of your morning time again illumine every object.

"Think not I am insensible to your brother's death, because I have not dwelt on its melancholy details more, or offered you the usual tribute of consolation. Few events could afflict me more ; but I do not know whether, under the circumstances, you would find this acceptable from me, or believe in the sincerity of my grief or sympathy. I cannot lay myself open to doubts of this

kind from any one I call 'beloved,' and from whom I demand esteem as my right, even if denied affection. Your treatment of this letter, dear Edith, will decide my future expressions.

"I am devotedly yours,

"LILLIAN DE COURCY."

Time passed, and no answer came to this letter. It seems that it was a great shock to Edith Howe, and that she resented it bitterly. But later, when the edge wore off her feelings, she saw the truth and justice of my proceeding, and manifested this change in a manner which I should anticipate events by recording here.

In accordance with some feeling of which I could not divest myself, I refused to marry Jasper under one year from the time of hearing of Everard Howe's death. Indeed, to me it was sufficient joy to see him, to be near him, to be sure of his affection. The love I bore him was rooted in my very being, and sufficed, as it existed, for my happiness. I should have been content to live beside him forever in the same relations that we then bore to each other ; but the thought of change, of separation, of divided feeling, must have killed me. With him it was something different. He grew restless under this probation, and sought a vent to his impatient spirit by frequent visits to the studios of the cities, and by renewed efforts in his own sphere of art.

Early in the month of September of that year, I accompanied Doctor Quintilian and Jasper to the city in which the pictures to which I have alluded were to be exhibited. My ambition for him was fully gratified by the eulogiums I heard lavished upon them, standing as I did in the crowd, an eager but unobserved listener and spectator. Alas ! those pictures shared the fate of

the classic halls they helped to ornament, and live now only in memory, their material part having been recently reduced to ashes.

Indulge me, reader, in the ineffectual effort I am about to make to bring them before you by description. They were suggestive pictures, and as such, difficult to convey to the imagination by words alone, for a suggestive picture is, after all, a mere pedestal for fancy to rest on, while she plumes her wings for flight.

He called them "Regret," and "Endurance." The first consisted of a single figure, that of a woman, young, worn, yet beautiful, bending above a letter. He represented her standing by a window reading it, dreaming over it rather, in the dying light of day, evidenced as this was by the lengthened shadows and moted sunbeams that flecked the floor.

It is evidently an old letter (I use the present, for the picture still lives before me), taken from a package of such on a table near, and that it has touched some mighty chord of feeling is evinced in every lineament of the sad, I had almost said quivering countenance. The parted and depressed lips seem just to have uttered a name, or an exclamation ; the emotion of the word yet lingers about them with a sort of tender anguish that cannot be described nor yet mistaken for any other phase of feeling.

One hand is clenched upon the sill as if to poise the otherwise faint and yielding form ; the other grasps the letter with a half-trembling eagerness, strangely enough conveyed, by that immovable attitude, to the eye and mind of the spectator.

Out of the past "Regret" has arisen !

Jasper had chosen the figure of a man to express "Endurance," a word that to his mind seemed to carry the union of Fortitude and Forbearance.

The face, a very grand one, looks out upon the gazer, I see it still in my mind's eye, dear reader, though fire-consumed in substance, so again I use the present tense for that which is materially a part of the past alone—full, calm, and glorious, with its expression of lofty resignation. The physical perfection of the figure commanded unusual admiration ; but to me this was subordinate to the sentiment it so successfully conveyed.

The scene lies in a prison by the barred window of which the man is sitting, resting one arm on a table on which are placed a Bible, a loaf, and pitcher. The other hand seems to waive aside the key which female fingers are extending to him through the bars. This slender hand, exquisite in beauty and expression, belongs to the muffled form of the woman without the grating, and alone indicates her station. On the floor of the dungeon lies an unsheathed sword, on which the foot of the prisoner is carelessly placed. A ray of light from the window streams first on the head of the martyr, then slanting off, gilds the open page of the book of life, suggesting his determination. He will endure.

Of the draping, coloring, arrangement of lights and shadows of this picture, I am not artist enough to speak knowingly, possessing as I do only the inner, not the outward artistic eye. But the approbation of connoisseurs was too favorable not to arouse the enmity of artists as a class, though there were individual exceptions among those who had achieved fame, and who no longer shuddered before the very shadow of a rival.

## CHAPTER VI.

ONE evening, on returning to our hotel, I found my bed and table encumbered with packages that had been sent in by Madame La Trobe. It was too vexatious.

"She might have waited at least for the first of October to have arrived, before forcing these articles upon me," I thought, with tears in my eyes. "What shall be done? How shall I arrange this matter, without applying to Doctor Quintil or Jasper, to meet the bills for a trousseau ordered for such an occasion? I wish I had asked for my diamond before I left home. I might have sold it for this purpose; but, as it is!"

I sat down, quite oppressed by the extent of my pecuniary involvements, quite uncertain what to do. I would not, for the world, have opened one of those tabooed packages. At length lights were brought, and the sound of the gong startled me from my reverie.

On going to the toilet-table to smooth my dress and hair, I saw a long envelope lying upon it, addressed to me. I opened it, and found Madame La Trobe's bill receipted by Doctor Quintil! In the next moment I went, with tears in my eyes, to answer his friendly, peculiar knock, gentle, oft-repeated, at the door.

"Not ready for supper yet, Lilian! Why, how is this? Crying, too, I protest. Silly child, you are homesick."

"Not at all; only vexed that all these things should have been forced on you," and I pointed to the package. "I wrote to Madame La Trobe hoping to prevent this."

"I know all about that," he said, placidly ; "she showed me the letter yesterday, when I called to try and hurry her a little, thinking you might need some of the matters on hand at once, and there is no use now, you know, waiting for the first of October. Many were unfinished ; but I decided to take them home with us, in consideration of some change of fashion that might occur before next year. But such as you need now, I commanded to be made up at once—your lace dress, for instance."

I clung to his arm, half laughing, half crying. "What a man you are, to be sure," I said, kissing his large brown hand—he never wore gloves, only carried them, and his skin tanned readily. "How generous you are—how mysterious, too. But what in the world made you suppose I wanted my lace dress now, if ever ? Don't you know, dear Dr. Quintil, I would not wear that dress to be married in, now, for the world ; it would be ominous, and how will it ever be useful to me for any other purpose ?"

"I will tell you after supper. But make haste now, and complete your toilet—a pretty one let it be ; the ladies in the parlor are elegantly dressed, I can assure you, yet I did not see one half as good-looking as you are. See, I have brought you a comb, set with turquoise, to suit your eyes, Lily ; and this little black lace scarf"—drawing the articles, as he spoke, from his capacious pockets, and unwrapping them—"they say it is the fashion ; 'Guipure point,' they called it, I believe, at that store with a Jewish name, I forget what, now—Judah or Levy, or some such Hebrew cognomen. Jasper says these will go well with your blue organdi—he wrote the name, so I remember that ; so hurry, love. I shall be back in twenty minutes, and I am famishing for a cup of good black tea."

I was ready when he returned, and we descended to the supper-

room, where Jasper joined us ; and where, weary with a day of city strolling, we all did ample justice to the somewhat slender fare.

"No biscuit !" reiterated Dr. Quintil, as the waiter made the communication that the establishment was minus the desired article ; "I really thought this people had become civilized by this time. Why, what is a man to live on ? Cold bread, and no biscuits ; and tea made with lukewarm hydrant-water. Milk, instead of yellow cream, too, Confucius !—what a supper !"

Yet he ate heartily of what was set before him, and went in good spirits to the drawing-room with me, whence Jasper soon vanished to fulfill an engagement.

"And now, I will tell you, Lily, what we want with the white lace dress immediately. We are going to a grand ball, to-morrow night, given by the queen of this city. You did not know this was a monarchy before ?"

"No, indeed," I said, laughing ; "but your queen has not called upon me, and I, you know, am a sovereign likewise, and must wait for this ceremony."

"Not at all. This queen does not visit, she only receives, which is a great deal better. Besides, she is an old and intimate friend of mine, royal as she is. Before she ascended the throne, I studied medicine with her husband (just think of a doctor's wife being a sovereign), and she has not forgotten our former affection. You need not look at me in that quizzical way, I never was the least bit in love with her, I assure you."

"Dear Dr. Quintil, I never dreamed of such a thing. As well suspect the Pope himself of any impropriety of this sort. But, tell me, how came she to be queen ? Who elected her ?"

"The fact is, this city is a peculiar one, and cannot get along

without a ruler. Other cities are governed by an oligarchy, and matters of etiquette are put to the vote. Not so here. This community requires absolute despotism to move it from its frigidity. There must be one sovereign, be he or she log or stork—one, and one only—the appointed of fashion, the layer-down of law. When King N—— B—— was deposed—that man of rare accomplishments and genius—‘alas ! we shall not look upon his like again !’—there was an interregnum, during which mediocrity became omnipotent ; but, after an interval—partly from charity, partly from ambition—this large-hearted and energetic woman took in her own hands the reins of government, and has shown herself a second Semiramis.”

“What a singular arrangement,” I said, humoring his jocose mood to the utmost. “But this lady, has she still a husband, and if so, why is he not king as well ?”

“Why is not Albert king of England, Lily ? Come, do not attempt to “prove me with hard questions.” Enough ; she reigns, and you are bidden to her court to-morrow night. See here, I have the invitation in my hat,” and he drew out the cards for the coming ball ; “but better than these, I had a verbal invitation first, and such a greeting as almost overpowered me. By the by I must not forget to get pumps and white gloves to-morrow,” looking wistfully at his hands. “Oh, dear, what an expense to be sure ! Well, well, it can’t be helped, a great bore nevertheless.”

“If you say another word about expense, I will send everything back to Madame La Trobe in a magnificent rage. You are nothing but a mean miser, and treat yourself worse than a slave. I will not stand by and see such a worthy man abused and slighted any longer. My patience is exhausted, so go to-morrow betimes, and array yourself in a full suit of fine black broad-



cloth, and get a new hat instead of that old slouch, which looks ashamed of itself, as if it was trying to slink out of sight, and a fashionable vest and neck-cloth, and a dozen medium-sized pocket handkerchiefs, without borders, and patriotic emblems, hem-stitched, too, so as never to be again mistaken for flags of truce or Fourth of July trophies when you draw them out of your pocket, and wave them as you always do. Do all this, or I go not a foot to the ball, and you and your queen may deplore my absence together."

He laughed at my assault, and would promise nothing, but finally complied with every requisition, and like all clumsily made men, was incredibly improved by his new, well-fitting garments and careful toilet. He was really handsome.

I was ready at ten o'clock, when Jasper brought my camelias and bouquet. Curls when natural are not difficult of adjustment, and my coiffure was made as usual by my own hands, two white camelias forming the only addition to the profuse tresses that crowned my head, my only point of personal pride.

I wore the superb white Brussels lace dress, that Dr. Quintil had given me, over white satin, with shoes and gloves to correspond, and my mother's pearls completed a costume which, in my innocent delight, I thought could scarcely be surpassed. Jasper's artistic eye was satisfied with the effect of the whole, and Dr. Quintil hovered round me in a perfect flutter of satisfaction.

But when I entered the crowded and magnificent apartments, I passed completely out of myself, and ceased to admire or question of my own attire. Had I worn the simplest muslin gown, I am sure it must have been the same, so entirely does the power of losing self-consciousness belong to and constitute a part of the poetic temperament—best gift after all of imagination.

It was some time before we could find the mistress of the revels. She had gone I believe into the conservatory with some valued guest, and we had time to walk around the house before she reappeared. I had imagined her a stately, beautiful woman, like my grandmother, perhaps, and the shock of her presence was almost unendurable at first, bearing with it as it did a great disappointment.

It was a matter of real concern to me that this woman should be of a piece with all of her magnificent surroundings. There seemed a fitness wanting between that hard-featured, homely face, suffused with purple, and bearing the lion's mark almost in its deeply traced lines, and that huge ungraceful figure, of which the mottled arms and neck were exposed in youthful fashion. Between these and the superb dress of Genoa velvet and lace, and exquisite gems that adorned her person, there seemed a strange discrepancy. Feathers drooped from her hair, and she bore in her hand a fan made of plumes of the richest dye, ornamented with a bird of Paradise, with diamond eyes, and claws set with rubies.

But her cordial greeting soon effaced the impression of her physique, and before long she managed so to interest and engross me that I forgot to remark her features. Her unaffected kindness of manner toward Dr. Quintil would alone have won my good will ; she drew him out as no one had ever done before. She brought old scenes before him, and the present passed out of sight.

He tore himself away at last abruptly, and unwillingly I could see, and went to join her husband, who sat alone to-night in his library, unable or unwilling to join the revels ; and then it was that the full charm of her manner and conversation fell over me

irresistibly. Starting at last as if afraid of having bored me, she said, "You do not dance, Miss de Courcy ; how is this ? Are you a church member ?"

"No, madam," I replied, "not in the fullest sense at least. I have never learned to dance, except in the careless and impulsive fashion of all joyous children. I should be a source of merriment to your guests were I to attempt this now."

"I am glad that you do not," she rejoined ; "selfishly glad I mean, for I wish to talk with you awhile ; but I do not mean to monopolize you very long, there are too many eager aspirants for an introduction to you to permit me to do this."

"I will beg you to permit me to remain a stranger here to night," I said. "After a time, Jasper will return—my escort here, Dr. Quintilian's nephew, and of the same name—and we will go together through your magnificent conservatory, of which so far I have only caught distant glimpses. In the meantime do not let me detain you a moment longer than convenient. I can amuse myself perfectly well as a 'mere looker-on in Vienna.'"

"You are one of the few young persons I have heard make that quotation perfectly," she rejoined, looking steadfastly at me. "Accuracy is better than dancing. Most persons lug in 'Venice' at the last."

"Solitude affords opportunities for details," I replied, "that city-bred people lack, but certainly it has its disadvantages. I should certainly like to dance well, better than anything else I think ; I should enjoy the exercise, and the social blending and exhilaration it occasions very much, but circumstances did not permit me to take lessons."

"You certainly do not mean pecuniary circumstances," she said, after a moment's pause. "Pardon me ; I know the subject

is a delicate one, but I feel a deep interest in Doctor Quintilian from old association, and for some reason (more difficult to define) in you ; I had heard that your grandfather left a good estate ?”

My lips moved but I did not reply. I was so startled by this unexpected opening of a subject usually forbidden ; I understood so little of that supremacy of position which makes a question graceful from one, which from another would seem impertinent.

“ We are not poor,” I said at last in suppressed accents ; “ but we lead a life of monastic seclusion—partly from choice.”

“ And partly ”—— she interrogated, looking fixedly at me.

“ From necessity,” broke from my incautious lips almost indignantly.

“ And this necessity is not poverty, you say. What then, Miss de Courcy ?” she persevered.

“ Forgive me, madam, if I beg to change this conversation. You are too well bred, too merciful to wish to prolong it, when I assure you it gives me pain. I must decline explaining what necessity.”

“ My dear, I honor your frankness, and I am glad you understood me so well. I am abrupt, inquisitorial even sometimes, I suppose ; but I never mean to be impertinent. Yet, perhaps, if you knew the world a little better, you would know how to waive replies without so positively declining them.”

“ I am quite rustic, I know,” I said, looking up, crimsoning and smiling at her kind reproof, kinder even in manner than words, “ and naturally rough and plain spoken ; but, like yourself, I never mean to be rude, however impetuous I may seem. There are chords, however, that vibrate very harshly under the slightest touch,” I added.

“ I know—I know,” she interrupted ; “ one ought to be very

careful with strangers. I am not sufficiently so, I suppose ; but I have been very much spoiled by an over-indulgent society."

" Doctor Quintil told me that you were considered the queen of this city," I said, gravely.

" My dear, are you in earnest, or only ironical ?" she asked, much amused.

" I only repeat what he told me. I understood him to mean that your influence was unbounded. Of course, the word ' Queen,' was metaphorical. I conceived his meaning perfectly, I think."

" It has its limits, Miss de Courcy—in my expenditure," she added, between her set teeth. " Yet I have good friends ; fast friends that must not be suspected. The world is not wholly false. There are some who may be trusted—some few," she sighed ; " at least I am willing to think so."

For a moment a cloud came over her countenance, from which the purple hue of excitement had now subsided, and she seemed lost in thought.

" Oh, those were happy days !" she said, musingly ; " happy days, when I suspected nobody. Now, I dare not confide ! the supremacy of interested motives is so great. Still, let me not complain ; there is much to enjoy."

" To be the cause of so much enjoyment to others is in itself a privilege," I ventured to say. " What a beautiful ball this is ! what a brilliant assemblage ! I have never imagined a gayer, more sumptuous entertainment !"

" With such an imagination as you possess, this is conceding much ; Doctor Quintil has told me of your powers."

" Oh, Dr. Quintil overrates me to my own confusion," I said, coloring. " He is so modest for himself, it is strange he should be so boastful for me, who am almost a part of himself."

"You have a right to talent," she resumed, "if indeed, it be a heritage. Erastus Bouverie was a man running over with it."

My hand was on her arm in a moment, then as quickly removed. I looked into her face.

"You knew him then !" I said. "Tell me—did you—did you admire my grandfather ?"

"Extremely, every one did ; but how pale you are—how you must love his memory ! How you must (let me speak out, Miss de Courcy, since I have gone so far) deplore his unhappy fate ! I honor such feeling." She spoke with earnestness.

I turned to conceal my emotion. I saw Jasper approaching us, and with a strong effort recovered my composure. I rose and took his arm at once. "We will go through the conservatories, with your permission," I said ; "I feel that I have trespassed too far on your time and attention already."

"We shall meet later in the evening, I hope," she said, smiling. "Promise me that you will not leave the house without seeking me again. I have a little project for you."

I gave the desired promise, and then free as air in that unknown society we roved through the plant and picture rooms, through hall, and dancing-saloon, and corridor, enjoying, admiring everything, coveting nothing. For did we not possess in the affection we gave each other, more than all earth's magnificence could purchase or supply?

I remember that Jasper made a sketch of the exquisite Mexican plant, the *Annunciata*, I believe, though I am not certain of the name, which represents a snow-white dove nestling its head beneath its wing, concealed, at first from view, by four white overlying petals.

There, too, was the superb *Victoria Lily*, almost covering the

basin that contained it, hollowed and cemented in the floor of the green-house ; and a stranger to me then, the night blooming Ceres, that night unclosed her reluctant bosom to the gaze of the crowd, and gave forth her balmy vanilla breath.

I was conscious of undivided enjoyment in all these things. They were so beautiful—so new ! they filled every sensuous requisition of my being, these and the clear-pealing music, and the light, alternately brilliant and subdued ; and the fair and richly apparelled women, and graceful men, mingling in dance, or waltz, or gallop, and the magnificent and lavish banquet at the end took captive my senses, and made me for a time the slave of luxury.

I have been at the state entertainments of the rich and fashionable since then ; but never at one that combined every requisite of enjoyment as did that first ball of mine. But the mortal part of her whose queenly hand provided all this splendor, this pleasure, now feeds the worm ; and he whose firm manly arm I leant on through that long evening of enjoyment, is dust and ashes—no, a glorious angel now !

Peace to such thoughts, such memories ; let me proceed. My story grows upon my hands. I had thought to confine it to the house of Bouverie ; but the wish to record that fairy time of my life is so strong with me, that I cannot resist the inclination. Have patience, “ wedding guest,” the mood will pass !

When I next saw the lady of the revels, she stood in a small apartment containing a piano, and some smaller instruments of music. The band was playing on a distant staircase, there was an interval in the dancing, and couples promenaded through the long corridors and parlors without restraint, conversing gaily.

She had sent for me to meet her in the music-room, and I came with Dr. Quintil and Jasper, at her bidding.

"I have heard that you have a beautiful voice," she said ;  
"and I want to hear you sing. Let me have the pleasure of  
hearing a sweet, natural voice again ; an unadulterated voice, so  
to speak. I weary of artificial singing."

"Mine is wholly uncultivated," I replied ; "my grandmother  
has been my only teacher."

"Your grandmother !" she started ; "Mrs. Bouverie survives,  
then. I thought you lived alone with Dr. Quintilian ? Tell me,"  
she added, after a pause ; "is she still beautiful ?"

"More beautiful than any one else that I have ever known,  
even in her age."

"Yet she is never heard of, and dwells, I suppose, in absolute  
seclusion. Of what use is her beauty ? An ugly face like mine  
would do as well to hide. Tell her I say this, and that she  
wrongs society. But I am trifling with what time remains to us.  
Come," and she led me to the piano. "Music is my passion,  
vocal music especially ; in hearing this only I forget myself. What  
will you sing, Miss de Courcy ?"

"I hardly know. The songs I sing are simple ballads chiefly,  
some of them old and mournful ; they would not please you, ac-  
customed as you are to the finest music."

"Give me something in a minor key, first ; something slow and  
sustained ; this tests the truth of the voice best."

I sang as she bade me, an air of Mozart's, to which I had set  
a few original words that happened to suit the measure, filling the  
whole music without repetition. They were these :

#### LIFT NOT THE VEIL.

Lift not the veil with careless hand,  
That hides a form of frozen clay ;



Nor touch with truth's enchanted wand,  
The glittering garments of the gay—  
Lest shrinking from the test supreme,  
They drop to ashes like your dream.

Believe me—what you see me now  
Elate in beauty, proud of mien ;—  
Nor rend the garland from the brow .  
Of her your love hath crowned a Queen ;  
That poisoned chaplet, in your wine,  
Would give to death, your faith divine.

Alas! for life! Alas, for love!  
If aught beyond the present fling,  
Their garden wealth of flowers above  
The shadow of a blighting wing;  
Could'st thou behold the arid past;  
Thy soul would feel the desert blast!

Then question not, of hidden thought;  
Of memory deep, or vain regret;  
Enough! The flashing smile you sought,  
Is yours to worship; then forget;  
The dance, the song, the glance are thine;  
But dreams and solitude, *are mine*.

“There are resources in your voice that are not developed by that air, those words, subdued and tender as both are,” she said, when I had finished the little strain. “Do not leave the piano; sing something else. I like your voice, I enjoy it; this is much for me to say, but there are depths in its musical capacity that even you are unacquainted with, I think.”

She mused awhile, and I ran my fingers over the keys in uncertain chords, not liking to refuse her, and yet still more disliking to comply with her request.

"And now another song, Miss de Courcy—a soprano strain—something more varied and passionate, if you please."

"I will sing you then a favorite song of Dr. Quintilian's; indeed I found the score among some old music of his, in manuscript, but not his own, I assure you," I added laughing. "I think the air is Italian," and I sang the song which suited my voice better than any other, the simple words of which I had composed.

When I looked up after finishing it, I saw that the room, empty when I began, was densely thronged. My first effort had brought no listeners, no commendations. Yet here was the undoubted tribute of hushed admiration. Was it the song? Was it the singing? Both appeared indifferent enough to me. I never knew more than this. I can say with all sincerity, I never cared.

Yet it oppressed me to have that silent throng about the piano I tried to make my way to a window I saw beyond; I was checked at every step by introductions, by murmured compliments, by insinuations rather than open expressions of admiration that confused and annoyed me.

"I did not come here to amuse these people," I said to Jasper in whispered tones, as he made his way to me at last. "I care neither for their admiration nor mockery, whichever this may be. I ought not to have been subjected to this—I, a stranger. Take me away!"

And tears of pure vexation stood in my eyes. The window opened to a verandah into which we passed unobserved. In another moment we stood out in the clear, cold moonlight, beneath the eye of heaven. The buzz of the multitude came from within, and the gaslight streamed from the windows. But we were as com-

pletely shut away from that artificial life as if seas had divided us from it.

We stood for a time enjoying that deep, sweet, intense solitude, the more perfect for being so near a crowd ; then turning, as we became aware of the lateness of the hour, sought a private entrance to the hall, through which we were to find our final egress. As we passed the window of the music room, from which we had lately emerged, I heard the voice of our hostess say in loud, undecided tones :

" There never was but one voice like that before, and that belonged to Madame Malibran."

" Oui Madame," was the sharp reply of the man, " bearded like a pard," we saw shrugging his shoulders by the piano. " Mais que voulez vous ? Elle a des larmes dans sa voix c'est vrai ; cependant, c'est une voix sauvage, tout à fait, tout à fait."

The criticism died into thin air, both really and metaphorically, and I should have forgotten it long ago but for the amusement it caused Jasper. The literal translation was often afterward applied to my voice by him.

Before we left the city on the following day, I received a superb bouquet of exotic flowers from royalty, together with a note containing an invitation to return in the winter and make a visit at her palace, and take lessons from able artists in vocal and instrumental music, at her cost, for old acquaintance sake.

The well-intended and liberal offer was declined, but never forgotten. She believed evidently, despite appearances, in our poverty, and sought to remove one of its harshest stings, the necessity of neglecting talent. Who shall say this woman was not generous, or deny her the possession of heart, even in the midst of fashionable frivolity ?

I have said truly, that the words of the second song were simple, yet perhaps they caught something of the tenderness of the sweet old strain to which they were wholly adapted, and thus I venture to insert them here :

## NEVER AGAIN, MINE OWN.

*(Italian air.)*

Never again, never again mine own,  
Shall our fond voices blend in speech or song ;  
Murmur of mine, whether of ruth or wrong,  
Shall haunt thee with its wild and thrilling tone  
Of tenderest pity, or of deepest pain,  
“ Never again, mine own, never again.”

When you behold the dim and dying moon  
Fade in the glory of the vernal day,  
Or watch a pale rose on its pendent spray  
Wave in the nightwind of the balmy June,  
They will renew to thee the solemn strain—  
“ Never again, mine own, never again.”

When a white dove against a stormy sky  
Flies with its cleaving pinions, fast and free,  
Or the wind moaneth in the aspen-tree,  
Tossing its ghostly, silvery leaves on high,  
Thy soul will yearn to join the old refrain,  
“ Never again, mine own, never again.”

For well I loved these tokens, they to me  
Were linked with aspirations far and dim,  
And stirred my being as a choral hymn,  
Lofty and sorrowful of things to be—  
For me the flower shall wane, the moon shall wane,  
“ Never again, mine own, never again.”

But unto thee their presence shall be fraught  
With a strange tenderness, a new regret ;  
They shall remind thee how we loved and met,  
How parted, with what depth of patient thought,  
I bore, as I shall bear, thy cold disdain,  
“ Never again, mine own, never again.”

## CHAPTER VII.

How joyous was that return to Bouverie—how fond was our welcome—how delightful our reunion ! We returned laden with presents and with news. No one was forgotten. Jasper brought his mother a superior timepiece ; Dr. Quintil, a long-desired carpet for her dining-room, humbly and gratefully receiving the well-worn, cast-off floor-covering for his particular sanctum, where, he earnestly affirmed, a new carpet would “ make him miserable ! ”

“ Think of the inevitable tobacco-stains, and then imagine the feelings of an economist like myself, in seeing a Brussels tapestry so disfigured. I tell you, this well-worn ingrain is a perfect God-send, for mine has just taken French-leave, and a new one would set me crazy.”

So he had it his own way, and we humored the humorist Dame McCormick and Bianca rejoiced in brown merino dresses, and high-topped combs—the last worn by the singularly hideous and eccentric person first mentioned, among her grizzled locks (in defiance of all known laws on the subject, with the teeth stuck in the wrong way), so that she looked like a stag of ten on high-days and holidays ever after.

For my grandfather there were books and engravings, and an exquisite snuff-box ; and for Fabius, a cane and a beaver hat—the last so speckless, and fitting him so admirably, that, to use Bianca’s expression, “ he looked as though he had been born with it on his head,” an expression that we considered quite Shakspearean, reminding us, as it did, of “ to the manor born,” and scarcely more

obscure or metaphorical. These presents were valued none the less for their perfect inutility.

As for Pat McCormick, who possessed a dreary taste for music, we made him happy with an accordeon, from which he pulled unwilling melodies, tortured and transmogrified by the process so as to be scarcely recognizable by ears polite. Among the sheep and swine of Bouverie he was, however, evidently accounted a second Orpheus. They gathered about him in astonished admiration, and "Days of Absence" became a watchword to all recreant animals of this description, that restrained enterprise, and recalled them to a sense of their present condition. Much depends, however, on a sympathetic audience, in achieving any artistic success.

I noticed that the fastidious ear of "Violet Fane" was fearfully pricked, whenever Pat began to draw out his "linked sweetness;" and the lugubrious wail of the "Soldier's Tear," suddenly commenced by him after leading the creature to her master, and committing the carelessly received reins to his hands, leaving his fingers free to touch his accordeon, had nearly put an end to Jasper.

After the first glow of meeting was over, I perceived again, as upon a former occasion, traces of unusual depression about my grandmother. There was no reason for this that I could fathom. Health reigned in her household, and a more than usually bounteous season blessed the land.

Before long this was explained in the following manner. I found Dr. Quintil walking the floor very impatiently, one morning, with a perturbed countenance, as I entered the dining-room. I stopped, and gazed at him with evident concern, then turned to withdraw.

"Come in, Lilian," he said ; "it will relieve me to tell you of my annoyance ; and you must learn to bear your part of every burden of Bouverie, now that you are identified with us all for life. I find that during our absence, that scoundrel, Smith, has been harassing your grandmother's life out ; and his last demand has been flatly—she fears, injudiciously—refused, so that there is no telling what may come to pass."

"What was the demand, Dr. Quintil, and what does he dare to threaten her with ? The wretch knows nothing !"

"More than we have supposed, I fear, Lilian. Heaven knows there may have been treachery somewhere, though I hardly think *that*. We certainly have used every precaution ; and, if we fail, God help us ! we cannot, at all events, reproach ourselves."

"Does he want money, or what ?" I asked, in a husky voice, while my heart sank within me with a sick foreboding.

"Do not be frightened," he said, approaching me kindly, and drawing me to a seat, "or I shall regret having made any communication to you on the subject. It is such a comfort, when a man is in trouble, to be surrounded with cool, courageous women. The time to be nervous is when all danger is over." He smiled, to reassure me.

"You apprehend danger, then ?"

"Inconvenience, rather than danger," he replied. "Smith boldly declares his belief that there is a concealed inmate at Bouverie, and demands five thousand dollars as the price of his secrecy. On receiving this, he swears to return to England, and to reappear no more on this side of the Atlantic, as well as to preserve his discovery—for such he has the temerity to call it—inviolable. He has the impudence to talk about the injury his character would sustain, should the matter ever be brought to light, and, for the



first time since we left her, has accosted your grandmother on the subject."

"He has spoken before of his conviction to Bianca, you remember."

"I recollect it well ; but his insolence in approaching Mrs. Bouverie surpasses everything ! I half believe I should be justifiable in shooting him like a dog. I certainly *shall*—and I have sent him word to that effect—if he ever addresses another syllable to her on any subject except that of his garden. But I do not wish to shed blood, if it can be helped. It is a necessity I recoil from." He shuddered.

"Give him the five thousand dollars, then, and let him go ! If you will advance it, I will give up my inheritance when I become of age, to repay you. Anything is better than this torture."

He hesitated. "I cannot command this sum just now," he said. "What I have, is loaned out for a term of years, with the exception of a little gold ; and I spend every cent of my income—I save nothing. Besides, Lilian, where would the matter end ? Would he not, like the leech's daughter, still cry 'give, give ?' Your grandmother, it is true, might, by mortgage on this property, realize this sum, were it judicious to do this ; but the interest, if not kept down, would soon eat up Bouverie, and that is her whole estate. At his death and hers, you receive your grandfather's income (you know the estate from which it springs cannot be alienated, though he had the right to divert it, as he did, by some intricate management of the eccentric Ursa Bouverie, during her life) ; and I believe, though death stared him in the face, Mr. Bouverie would never consent to lend himself to such a sacrifice, as he would be obliged to make personally, to silence Smith. Yet, I may be mistaken."

"Shall I broach the subject, Dr. Quintil?"

"No, decidedly no; it would be better to remove him if it came to that. We could all remove to Italy at a far less sacrifice, by proceeding cautiously in the matter, and with the assistance Bishop Clare would and could give us. There we could live in comfort, and unknown."

"Such determined hostility, it seems to me, would track us even there. We cannot resist this wretch; let us try to compromise."

"That would be to acknowledge the truth of his accusation, and so place ourselves eternally in his power. We must repel it, now that we have gone so far, and by additional caution elude further observation on his part. He will not move in the matter just now I think, and Bishop Clare will soon be here; then we can sit in council, but for the present we must not alarm Mr. Bouverie."

"Do you think that were the sum he asks granted him—a fortune in his condition—Smith would forfeit his part of the agreement, and return for more? Is that your idea, Dr. Quintil?"

"I have come to the conclusion that we should only be able to purchase temporary security by making terms with him. The better plan, it seems to me, for the present at least, is to pay him good wages, and keep him in our employment. When he finds he cannot intimidate us into concessions, he will come to his senses. He has already been the gainer by preserving silence. Your grandmother has not dared to refuse him any advance to his wages demanded so far, for some time past. He knows this, but presumed too far at last."

"How has he behaved since then?"

"Oh, very humbly. Perhaps after all, her impulse, for the consequences of which she trembles, taught her to treat him as was best for such a reptile. Now if he were only an American I might deal with him ; but what can one do with a grovelling foreigner ?"

"Or even a Catholic," I suggested. "Bishop Clare could control him in that case."

"Yes, would that he were a Catholic, Lily ; something might be made of him then."

At another time I might have smiled at this incautious admission of an avowed Calvinist, but matters were serious now—too menacing for mirth.

Soon after this conversation, letters arrived from Colonel de Courcy and his attorney, acquainting Dr. Quintil with the death of Lady Constance Torrington, and my consequent inheritance of her private estate. This was small in English eyes, but to me, with my habits of frugality, five thousand pounds was a brilliant accession, and, added to the small independence that I already possessed, would make me comparatively rich.

Yet every shilling of this should go in my grandfather's service, if needed to defend him from persecution, as soon as I could command it. I was determined on this, and I knew that Jasper would not oppose the desire of my heart.

He had enough I knew to support us both in modest comfort ; his talents would ere long bring him wealth and honor, I firmly believed. I felt certain now that if we could temporize with Smith, he might finally be purchased by the settlement of an annuity, the payment of which should be conditional on his silence, the capital to be his finally ; that is after the expiration of my grandfather's natural life.

The possession of the means whereby to protect my grand father's existence from annoyance and even danger, brought a glow to my heart and cheek, and reacted on all around me. Yet I was not insensible to the mournful fate of that relative, from whom circumstances had divided my career.

Death was, however, preferable to the life she had led. She had been for years in a nervous condition, bordering at times on insanity, caused, it was supposed, by her domestic sorrows, but of these no one knew more than the garrulity of servants, or the undisguised harshness of her husband made evident.

The charm, whatever it was, that attracted her to him in the beginning, sealed her lips, and riveted her chains through life. Had children been born to her, an alleviation of her grief might have been afforded by maternal care and affection. Or even had I gone to her as a daughter, some consolation might have risen from our intercourse.

Sometimes I think my duty pointed that way, although I shudder to think of the thorny path I must have trodden in its performance. Again, I feel convinced that an all-wise Providence shaped my destiny, and that no human intervention could have changed it from its course.

Colonel de Courcy was necessarily trustee until I attained my majority, and he wrote to Dr. Quintil, as my legal guardian, to apprise him of the steps he had taken. He mentioned me with cold courtesy, made no allusion to Edith Howe, waived all knowledge of my grandmother's existence, and seemed to have drawn back into his shell, as if regretting that he had ever compromised his dignity by venturing so far from its narrow limits.

More than ever now I felt that an impassable barrier had risen

between me and Taunton Tower ; more than ever I surrendered my whole being to those around me.

There was a strange joy to me in the feeling that one house contained all that I loved or cared for in this world. I that was born ambitious, through the power of happiness and affection became totally indifferent to every promise of fame, or voice of society.

It was pleasant to hear, and see, and enjoy these things at a safe distance ; to skim the papers, to read of distant pageantry and luxury, and fashion. Of what the beautiful Mrs. C—— was doing in New York, or the brilliant Madam J—— in Washington, or the plain, little queen and her stately court in England, or the French élite in Paris.

My grandmother was infinitely amused by the vivid delight I took in all these descriptions of people, who moved before me, like characters in novels, real in imagination only—therefore more real to me than if I had connected with them any personal identity.

“If you could only see them, Lilian, as they are—for these are flesh-and-blood characters, after all—how your interest would slacken in them, and their affairs? I have seen enough of the world to know, that, with a moderate share of good looks, some tact, more self-possession, a taste for dress, and a capacity for flattery, a very ordinary woman may lead society. Aye, lead those a thousand times more gifted, more beautiful, more refined, than herself—for women of the latter stamp rarely possess the practical audacity necessary to put themselves forward in the full glare of the public eye.

“Blunt nerves, and universal good nature, must belong to the leader of society who makes her way to such position by dint of

her own determined assurance. There are, indeed, rare instances where women of the highest caste are borne up by the force of circumstances to the topmost rung of the ladder ; but it is not without immense sacrifice and suffering that they maintain themselves on this giddy height.

“The fatal facility of being bored, so common with high-strung people, makes it almost intolerable to them to come in daily smiling contact with the cold, the mean, the common-place. However dear the admiration of the few friends she esteems may be to a woman of high culture and sensibility, the approaches of the fawning flatterer, or the airs of self-constituted importance, are equally distasteful and fatiguing.

“So, Lillian, this hard world-service does not repay its votaries after all, unless they are coarse enough, and hard enough, to go ungalled from the harness.”

I smiled at my grandmother's little lecture. “Actors are very weary, often,” I said, “when spectators are quite fresh, and full of delight in their performance. So, at this safe distance, it is pleasant to look on, and trace the career of people so removed from us that they appear no more than histrionic characters. And, in spite of all you say—every word of which, I know, is wrong from deep experience—I am so self-willed that I cannot help admiring a woman, self-poised enough, and resolute enough, to lead the many-headed monster. I think the same sort of intellect is required for this, that makes men rulers in higher places.”

“Lillian, mere success is not worthy of admiration, in any case, unless based on high motives. The greatest men of this world have probably been unsuccessful ; the noblest women I have ever known, have been obscure. Circumstances have so much to do

with success. See how they threw up to the very crest of the wave, that bold, bad man, Napoleon Bonaparte. An exhausted horse can be managed by a child. Cæsar, you know, cried, 'Give me some drink, Titania,' like a sick girl, when ill in Spain—so Shakspeare says ; and nations have their times to be sick, and accept any leader that presents himself. I have long ceased to merge merit in success."

"Then you won't think the less of me, grandmother, if my book falls flat from the press. I am so glad of that !"

"Your book, Lilian ?"

"Don't you know about my book of poems, that Dr. Quintil is going to have published, and that Jasper and he like so much—but, of course, they are very partial critics—and that my grandfather says is nothing but a bundle of sticks, strong only in companionship—very ill-natured, was it not?—and that you, dear grandmother, have never read a line of?"

"Oh, Lilian, don't venture on such a step—you are too young, too inexperienced, to write well. You know I have always discouraged this inclination on your part ; but, if you will write, take time and thought, at least."

"Grandmother, I *have* to write."

"My dear, where is the necessity?"

"Here," I said, laughing, pointing to my brow and breast. "Don't you know that poets write because they must, not because they can? You remind me of Talleyrand's reply to the man who was urging him for employment, because he said he must live :—'*Mon ami, je n'en vois pas la nécessité.*'"

She smiled. "Ah, Lilian, you worship fame—this is your necessity, I fear."

"I expect none," I answered earnestly. "My name will never

be known in connection with these poems, nor suspected ; yet, if approved, it will be pleasant for all around me to know that I possessed some power ; and, if they fail, I know you will think none the less of me for such failure. So I shall placidly await the issue."



## CHAPTER VIII.

ALL this time the subject of so much anxiety kept on the even tenor of his way above-stairs, passing the mellow, melancholy autumn hours as best he might, in books, in thought, in work, of his peculiar kind—in society, such as his house afforded him, and in dreams of that brilliant future, which, like the Aurora of the northern heavens, flushed with its rosy light the long and dreary night of his captivity.

It strikes me now as something strange that my grandfather never seemed to connect any idea of change with my condition. Had he made up his mind that my individuality was to be merged in that of others, and that the names, so dear to woman's heart—those of wife and mother—were never to be applied to me? Or, did he foresee, as a blind necessity of my position, that end from which he recoiled with such bitter and ineffectual pain, when forced on his notice at last?

Was it from such apprehension—such certainty, almost—that he seemed to ignore Jasper's very existence, so that I never ventured to breathe his name before him, or allude to his genius? And yet I felt that he must have known of his presence, his absence, of his return, of his vocation, of his peculiar devotion to me. Even Fabius, the uncommunicative, must have signified, in time, something of all these things, either by direct or indirect allusions, or by accidental remark, never lost on one so quick, so apprehensive, as my grandfather. This matter remains, must ever remain, *mysterious to me.*

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It will be remembered that since the experiment of the "draught of life," my visits to my grandfather's apartments had been made in the company of others only. To this arrangement he had ventured no remonstrance; nor, since the first ineffectual effort to change my grandmother's resolution on this subject, had I offered the slightest opposition. It was in the month of September that, for the first and last time, I broke through the somewhat arbitrary, yet acknowledged law that had heretofore restrained me, and went alone to the sealed apartments of Bouverie.

At the termination of a meal, Fabius, who had purposely detained me for a draught of water I had asked for, pretending that it was not properly iced, until my grandmother and Dr. Quintil had left the room, placed very mysteriously in my hand a slip of paper containing a few words in the well-known caligraphy of my grandfather—characters so clear and even I have never seen elsewhere out of print.

"Lillian, can you come to me?" ran the message. "I must see you alone, once more. This is no whim, but an urgent necessity, such as may never occur again. Be secret, and meet Fabius in the plant-room at midnight. He will conduct you."

For a moment I hesitated. Although I had given no promise to that effect, my unresisting obedience seemed a tacit agreement on my part to fulfill my grandmother's wishes; and I felt it was wrong to violate this, however unwillingly accorded. Yet to disappoint him, whose claims on my duty seemed also undeniable, was hardest of all. For a moment there was a struggle.

I looked up, still holding the paper in my hand, still undecided what to do. The old man was intently watching my face, perhaps, reading my internal conflict in its expression. When his eyes met mine he went on again with his work, that of clear-

ing away the table-service, as if perfectly indifferent to my decision.

Yet, when I said at last : " Fabius, I will go !" he could not conceal his satisfaction.

" I will meet you in the plant-room, with a lantern, at twelve o'clock, Miss Lilian. You shall not go up that steep ladder in the dark this time."

" Be punctual ; I will be there," I said, somewhat impatient of his allusion to my willful adventure, which I supposed to be a secret, at least from him.

He looked wistfully at me for a moment, laid his finger on his lip, then taking up his tray of glass, left the dining-room.

" Fabius is growing garrulous," I thought ; " what will happen next ? and after all, what can my poor grandfather want ? Perhaps, he has heard of Smith's proceedings ; perhaps, he contemplates an escape. Great heavens ! where is all this to end ? How I wish Jasper were at home. Alas ! he has grown so necessary to me, that my powers of thought are crippled in his temporary absence."

That night my grandmother detained me long in her chamber, talking to me more openly than she had yet done of her contemplated arrangements for my comfort. I scarcely knew what I was saying when called upon to reply, and felt unutterably relieved when at last she dismissed me with the words : " Sleep soundly, dearest ; it is almost twelve o'clock !"

It was not her custom to enter my room after I had retired for the night, and the door, except in warm weather, was usually closed between us, so that I ran little risk of being discovered ; yet, the certainty of this would not have deterred me from the course I pursued. At twelve o'clock I found Fabius waiting for

me in the conservatory, with the key of the basement ladder-room in his hand, and a few moments later, I stood, after clambering cautiously up the stairway, breathless with excitement in my grandfather's presence.

He was sitting in his great chair in the centre of the hall as I entered it, near the round table with its scarlet cloth, on which, as on the first night of my secret visit to his chamber, a lamp and candles were burning. The night was chill for that usually clement season, and he was dressed to meet its requirements, in that warm dressing-gown of crimson and purple flowered brocade which had invested him, in Pat McCormick's eyes, with the dignity of a king ; nay, the Pope himself. It certainly became him well, and brought into almost startling relief his intense pallor, and rich flowing steel-colored hair, and the flashing brilliancy of his eyes. There was an expression on his face that I had never seen it wear before, and which for a moment held me silent and spell-bound before him. He looked to me like a man over whom some great change was passing even then, a change that might be called a crisis, such as that which comes to a young man suddenly stricken into age by the agency of fear or grief. Or rather to my excited fancy he appeared that night in his wanness and solitude, like one spared from a shipwreck or an earthquake, or a volcanic overflow ; one of many to testify by the anguish of his physical change to their otherwise unrecorded horrors.

There are times, I believe, in the lives of men, when their fate draws near to them, and its shadow rests above them, however distant may be its consummation.

Who has not seen a vulture swoop above its prey, and then soar away again with its wide outspread wings as if destined

never to return? Who does not know that after it has exhausted itself in upper air by graceful and manifold gyrations it will descend once more to seize that which it merely shadowed before?

Look back, you who writhe in the talons of the inevitable, and recall the dark forebodings which the dusk shadow of its wings long since has shed above you, and recognize the intention of your doom.

"Lilian," he said, "you have come, I knew you would. You are punctual, too—a king's virtue, child. Have you been secret as well?"

"I have obeyed you, grandfather," I replied, a little coldly perhaps.

He took my hand, he gazed upon my face, he murmured of the pleasure my prompt acquiescence with his wish had given him, of the joy my presence always afforded him.

Touched and grateful, I knelt before him, on his low footstool, and kissed his hands.

He held my wrists in his grasp, silently for a time. I felt that he was counting my pulses.

"There is health enough in these young veins," he said, "to justify me in making the request I have sent for you to prefer. The rich life-blood abounds here even to superfluity. Lilian, you have blood, and to spare."

"Blood, grandfather," I repeated, struggling slightly to withdraw my arm. "You do not want my blood, I hope? Is he insane after all?" was the rapid thought that swept through me, "and is this a part of the past, so long esteemed as crime, mere madness at last?"

He relinquished his hold immediately, and said with evident

mortification, "You surely do not think I mean to harm you, Lilian?"

I stood before him with my head cast down, as the guilty stand before their accusers.

"No, no indeed," I murmured, "I know you would not harm me, unless—unless"——

"Unless I were mad, Lilian; is that what you would say?" he asked, still surveying me with his piercing, reproachful eyes; then waiting a moment for a reply, which never came, he added, "you are right there; but I am not mad—have absolutely no capacity for madness, child. Listen, I only ask from you one cup of that generous blood, that flowed from my veins in the beginning."

"This is a strange fancy of yours, grandfather—a horrible fancy. Do you drink blood? Are you a vampire?" I tried to smile, but shuddered in the attempt. "I must not seem afraid," I thought, "for if this be mania, such evidence would increase it; and yet how can Fabius seem so unconcerned, if he meditates any horrible thing? Perhaps they are going to unite and sacrifice me."

In spite of my better resolution, I felt myself trembling at the thought of playing the part of an unwilling Iphigenia. Fortunately, this passed unobserved.

"Hear me dispassionately," he said; "then decide as you will. I ask your assistance in the preparation of a remedy, on which my feeble life depends. I have been in the habit of drawing from my own veins, or those of Fabius, the required amount of fluid to complete my preparation; but since my long illness, my strength has failed. His, too, declines, and unless the properties of perfect health be found in the blood thus used, it is of little or

no avail. To-day I threw three hundred sovereigns, the last of my treasure, in the crucibles. All this will be wasted, unless I obtain the necessary ingredient wherewith to divide the smoldering mass from the ethereal spirit that makes the elixir."

"Why not use the blood of a lamb, or of a goat, grandfather; or beef's blood, as I have heard they do in sugar refineries? These can be easily procured, and human nature spared the horror of such an experiment."

"Because the chemical affinities are all wanting in these that success depends on; but, Lilian, I will not urge you further; I will not ask again, even to save my own life, for a gill of the blood I gave you."

I was nerved to sudden determination by these words.

"Be sure you take no other, grandfather," I said, hazarding a feeble jest to raise my own courage. "Spare my De Courcy blood, I implore you;" and baring my arm, I stretched it forth, and turned away.

A small porcelain urn was brought forward, and Fabius breathed a vein with a dexterity that manifested practice. I had just began to feel slightly faint and giddy, when my grandfather staunched the orifice, and bound my arm himself with bandages, in readiness for the occasion; first touching the wounded vein with a liquid which removed soreness from the arm, and prevented all subsequent inconvenience.

"Aye, Lilian, this will do," he said; "this young and ruddy blood is what I needed. Do you know, child, that the time is not far distant when he who can afford to purchase such relays for his veins weekly, or even monthly, may put off death indefinitely? The surgeon will let young blood into the old man's veins then, as easily as the barber trims his beard now, and it will

be a part of the received hygeian system to do this, indispensable even to the toilet of every sexagenarian."

He held the all but transparent cup between his eyes and the brilliant lamps. "It is perfect," continued he, "every globule round as a drop of rain. I fear I have not spared your De Courcy blood, as you requested, however. I think I discern a mixture ; but come, you shall see the 'charm work. Medea was a bungler compared with Erastus Bouverie !"

He led me to the crucible, red hot over its charcoal furnace, and lifting the lid, showed me the dull, yellow, molten mass within.

"Now look, Lilian."

He took from the marble slab, or counter, as I have elsewhere called it, a vial of white liquid, which, when opened, emitted the odoriferous, and, to me, grateful and reviving smell of almonds, and bending over the crucible, poured in carefully about half the contents of the bottle, quickly replacing the close-fitting glass stopper.

Instantly the seething mass stood still, a few large bubbles rose, flashed, dispersed, and a dull violet flame seemed to flit and flicker over the surface.

"Now, Lilian, all is ready. Look attentively, and behold the crisis !" His face was rigid as steel, as he dashed in the blood.

The flame died out, the whole mass seemed to shudder and recoil ; then separate as instantaneously as I have seen the curd and whey of milk divide under the action of an acid, or, to use a grandiose comparison, as earth and sea might have divided in the beginning of time. A mass of substance was precipitated to the bottom of the crucible, and oh, wondrous vision ! in the clear, amber-colored fluid above, myriads of tiny serpents of flashing light seemed gliding, quivering, coiling in ring after ring, and springing in spiral movements to the surface !



"It is the vital principle at work," he said, in suppressed tones, "electrifying the duller agent. The combination will be more than usually perfect. The blood of genius works well ! Fabius, extinguish the fires." His voice was low and husky.

He spoke no more until this was done; then steadily and slowly, and with every nerve strained to its fullest tension in the anxiety of the moment—for much depended on the accuracy of this movement—he poured into a silver bowl the wonderful elixir, preparatory to sealing it in crystal vials.

"And now, Lilian, see what remains." I looked ; the crucible was two-thirds filled with dull, yellow dust, not unlike flowers of sulphur, gritty to the touch, and unsightly to the eye.

"Is there no value in this ?" I asked.

"No more than in ashes—nay, scarce as much. Three hundred sovereigns gone to make one pint of elixir—a costly remedy; but what is gold to life ?" He gazed at me with his flashing eyes, his unspeakably brilliant smile.

"Life ! Oh, there is magic in that word beyond any other that the cunning brain of man has devised as a vehicle for thought. It includes all things—it is a circle, complete in itself. It is a thing to worship, to preserve beyond hope, or fame, or honor, or love, even—the only direct manifestation of Godhead we possess ! Life, as we know it here—I mean, child, in connection with this fine sensitive frame, with all its wonderful combinations of nerve, and fibre, and capacity of sensation and resistance—life, as we know it, whether in its fullness or its poverty. Better than any glory the filmy future promises. Who wants immortality at the expense of such a present ? Who desires, save your priest-deluded enthusiast, to be that qualmy thing, an angelic *essence* ? Then, in striking contrast to all this power, this con-

sciousness, this capability of enjoyment or of suffering, look at death !”

As if he saw the grim spectre of his fancy before him, he gazed intently forward, his voice dropped into a hoarse and suppressed key, and he shook his head mournfully. “The grave ! How terrible it is—dark, narrow, cold—the end of all ! No wonder that Hamlet shrank from suicide. Nothing beyond, Lilian ; nothing beyond. Soul, as you call it, sense, genius, power, enjoyment, all merged in that last necessity, the worm.”

“Grandfather,” I said, firmly, “death has no horrors compared to a belief like this. Your ideal surpasses God’s actual.”

“And you, Lilian,” he said, turning suddenly upon me, with his mocking smile, “what is it you *believe*, after all—such is, I think, the popular word for delusion—a word of very deep and different significance, however, when properly employed.”

“That I shall live forever and ever, as you *believe* that you are living now. It seems to me that my delusion gives me an advantage, grandfather, over yours.” A bitter sarcasm, no sooner uttered than regretted.

“I do believe you are in earnest, child,” he said, after gazing at me attentively for a moment, without noticing my significant speech ; and, turning on his heel, he began to walk the room slowly, musingly ; uttering, from time to time, the words, “Strange, strange, if true.”

“Grandfather,” I said gravely, and with a courage that seemed to me came from something beyond myself, “this life that you worship so cannot be long with you ; then comes the great beginning ! Oh, grandfather, make friends with the future, so soon to be your eternal present. Make your peace with God, so soon to be your visible judge. Try and believe that the worm is not the

end of all, and that one sinful human soul is more valuable in his sight than the bright sun himself."

"And do you believe this, Lily?" he said, his Voltaire-like smile quivering a moment across his face, then giving way to a deep gloom as sudden as a storm-cloud.

"Child, child, you would esteem me a bad man, I fear, if you knew all, and yet I think you love me. How is this?"

"Not half as much, grandfather, as he who died for you, for me, for all!"

"Do not preach to me, child," he said; "you reverse the order of things. Suppose you carry the matter out, however, before we part," he added, after a slight, almost embarrassed hesitation, "for it is late, Lilian, wearing on to day. It is customary for the old to bless the young; but, to-night, Lilian, you shall bless me, if you like," and he bowed his head before me, speaking carelessly, yet not without emotion.

I scarcely knew whether he were in earnest or not; this mattered little—I was, and laying my hands upon his lion-like head, I said:

"In the name of Christ, I do bless you, my beloved grandfather."

He started from his drooping attitude, much affected by my earnestness; and, taking my hands in his, he spoke to me in these deep, pathetic accents that gave his voice such power to search the soul.

"Child, you have blessed me, truly, with blessing never spoken until now. Before I knew you, my life was a barren waste, a stagnant, green-scummed pool! New and rich treasures of enjoyment has your simple affection laid open in the blasted nature of Erastus Bouverie, from sources unsuspected before. Receive my *thanks*—I have no more to give you."

He towered above me in his princely stateliness, he kissed my brow with the calm yet tender salute of paternity, then first bestowed ; then held me long before him, while he gazed fondly, sorrowfully, on my face.

What thoughts swayed him then ? What prophetic knowledge of his doom lowered above him—what dark and unavailing regret rose from the depths of the past ? All these seemed to me depicted on his pale and mobile features, as he stood rapt in dreams above me.

“Go,” he said, at last, “and forgive me, my love, that for this once, and from a great necessity, I have trespassed on the laws that ought to govern you. Come no more, except with the consent of those guardians who are fittest to advise you now. From me, you know, Lily, the right, the glory has departed. Call me Ichabod !”

The acknowledgment cost him dear, although he tried to smile in making it. I read it in his face, his faltering voice, his unavailing effort at gaiety. It quite unnerved me, excited as I had been before. I clung to him, weeping childishly.

Forgive me, Jasper, if for that moment, I felt that I could surrender even my hopes of happiness through thee, to serve, to save him, the only earthly father I had ever known.

Forgive me, my Creator, if I made too much an idol of this thy stricken yet stately creature, fallen like the son of the morning, yet oh, a monarch still !



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